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"Be ready to defend to the best of your ability."

Motivations of women to join civil defence: the case of Estonia and
the Naiskodukaitse (Women's Voluntary Defence Organization)

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MA Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Critical scenarios have determined a rekindled interest in civil defence in recent years. In particular, Estonia has registered an exponential increase among women interested in becoming members of Naiskodukaitse, a women's voluntary defence organization. Against this background, this study suggests a different approach that goes beyond the mere historical perspective of the phenomenon. The aim is to investigate motivations that influence women nowadays to consider becoming members of these types of organizations. In order to find the appropriate approach, I adopted a sociological approach to study the phenomenon and formulate adequate policies to implement women's role in the defence sector or address further issues. Women are interested in contributing to their country's national security, but not by undertaking a military career, but rather by searching for different opportunities, more focused on the immediate outcome that their commitment to the organization can generate.

The aim of this study is to investigate at what motivates women to join volunteer defense organizations. The research is based on the Estonian Naiskodukaitse, a volunteer defense group. The research design is a single case study, and data is gathered through interviews and an open-ended questionnaire. A qualitative approach is used to analyze the data. The explorative nature of the study corresponds to the qualitative approach that the researcher intends to employ. The study defines volunteer female defense groups, the responsibilities and services they perform, and how they vary from military forces. Furthermore, the study addresses how women are positioned in security studies, providing an overview of their transition from passive security consumers to active security consumers.

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Introduction

Over the last few months, the Kaitseliit (Estonian Defence League) has reported a significant increase in the number of citizens who voluntarily decided to become members. Data shows a high level of participation; with 28,000 volunteers (Kaitseliit, s.d.) in the last year, the organization has a substantial level of engagement, especially among women. They have contributed to bolstering the reserves of volunteers by considering the possibilities offered by Naiskodukaitse to contribute to national defence (Vahtla & Wright, 2022). Naiskodukaitse (Women Home Protection) was founded in 1917 as a paramilitary group, having a central role in Estonian society regarding patriotic values, national defence and social cohesion. Years after the restoration of independence in 1991, the organization was integrated as a female subunit of Kaitseliit (Estonian Defence League). The organization remained faithful to the original purpose to assist the Estonian Defence League, promote patriotic values, provide training to the members, enhance their active role within the society, and develop a safe environment (Kaitseliit, s.d.).

Due to this, the Estonian government continue to strengthen its initiatives to enhance the country's military capabilities, coupled with efforts to increase public engagement in national defence. Several studies have been conducted to estimate the general attitude among different segments of society.

Last May, a survey conducted by Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ for the Ministry of Defence evidenced an overall highly positive attitude towards citizens who generally choose to volunteer inside the EDL (Eesti Uuringukeskus, 2022). In particular, similar support has been registered regarding having a female subunit, although no specific reference is made regarding the gender of the respondents. It was praised for its constant engagement in challenging women to support military units, creating a sense of community among the members, and social cohesiveness. Social cohesion matters because it enables a sense of unity and perhaps commonality among individuals regarding their respective social stratum. If applied to a voluntary defence organization, members will contribute to developing a more secure and inclusive society where women are acknowledged for their contribution and support for society without undermining their effort.

Multiple studies discuss the topic of national defence organizations during the Second World War. So far, one of the most comprehensive studies on voluntary defence organizations concerns the case of the United Kingdom (Summerfield & Peniston-Bird, 2007) (Noakes & Grayzel, 2012). However, Home Guards and their female subunits have become crucial for territorial defence and represent an interesting phenomenon in Scandinavian and Baltic countries (Davis, 2006). The most famous cases are the Finnish "Lotta-Svard", the Norwegian "Norges Lotteforbund", and the Swedish "Svenska Lottakaren.". Although historical materials provide insightful contributions in addressing women's willingness to contribute to the national defence in times of war (Virtanen, Lämsä, & Takala, 2017) (Ellefson, 2016), what is missing is a comprehensive explanation of the factors that lead women nowadays to join voluntary defence organizations. Against this background, this study suggests a different approach that goes beyond the mere historical perspective of the phenomenon; instead, I aim to investigate motivations that influence women nowadays to consider becoming members of these types of organizations. Including a sociological approach means finding appropriate methods to study the phenomenon and formulating adequate policies to implement women's role in the defence sector or address further issues. Women are interested in contributing to their country's national security, but not by undertaking a military career, but rather by searching for different opportunities, more focused on the immediate outcome that their commitment to the organization can generate. Studies on other defence and combat groups have highlighted connection with the community as a possible factor (Schneckener, 2017), political reasons (Eggert, 2018), and values (Segal M. W., 1995). Other reasons have been addressed by Mankowski et al. (2015) and found a correlation with the study conducted by Kiili (2016) among women in the armed forces. These studies are used as a preliminary base to study women's voluntary defence organizations to assess motivations nowadays.

There are several reasons for the necessity to broaden the literature on women's voluntary defence organizations. First, the women's volunteer defence organization under investigation, Naiskodukaitse, presents a distinctive secular structure and past that distinguishes it as the only one of its kind in the Baltic region. Furthermore, no comparable organization with similar characteristics created explicitly for women has been found in neighbouring countries such as Latvia or Lithuania. It could be argued that, although these countries presented similar socioeconomic and political factors, as the result of the oppressive regime formed during the Soviet occupation, the Estonian struggle for freedom might have encouraged the formation and re-establishment of Naiskodukaitse, which encloses national identity's values. In addition, the

organization connect women who share the same interests, perhaps most specifically on national security and patriotism. This sense of community might be appealing for creating a sense of identity or who is seeking a purpose. Secondly, it should acknowledge the organization's emphasis on women's empowerment and leadership. Gender might influence their motivations to join the organization and, consequently, challenge the current situation regarding female representation and engagement in the defence sector. Therefore, Naiskodukaitse might empower women to adopt a proactive stance. Understanding women's motivations to join voluntary defence organization within an environment that has been traditionally male-dominated can evaluate whether these organizations reject gender stereotypes. Lastly, as a NATO member, Estonia benefits from military assistance from its partners and in a similar situation, it could be questioned the necessity for a volunteer defence organization like Naiskodukaitse. Estonia's proximity with Russia, its history and the event of February 24th certainly accentuated the critical importance of maintaining a similar organization for national defence purposes and that can enable women to acquire essential and transferrable skills. Studying this type of organization would enable scholars and policymakers to assess its capability to foster national security by evaluating its strategy.

Although similar organizations have been observed in Scandinavian counties, a thorough investigation of the Estonian women's voluntary defence organization suggests a distinct and intriguing empirical case. The reasons why women volunteer for Naiskodukaitse can be motivated by various factors, e.g., historical past, different approaches to national security, and geographical context. Due to these motivations, membership in this organization might assume a distinct significance for Estonian women. As Clary, Snyder and Ridger (1992) have addressed, identifying women's motivations would also be highly beneficial for the organization. Studies on the attitudes of women to take part in voluntary defence organizations are necessary for small states to help decision-makers to tailor their policy better, allowing them to reach a broad audience, educate citizens about civic participation and perhaps better explain why there is still a considerable gap between women and men joining the defence organizations.

Due to this, the scope of the research is to conduct an explanatory study, addressing *what motivates women to participate in voluntary defence organizations?*

In order to answer the research question, the study draws on the literature on civil defence and feminism studies. The literature on civil defence is necessary to specify the central concept of the study, meaning what civil defence is and the main roles performed. This is consequently

necessary to provide a conceptual definition of women's voluntary defence organizations. Secondly, feminist studies are used to focus on and make women visible within these organizations. Using other theoretical approaches, the study would not ensure women the required visibility to contribute to national defence and enhance the security studies debate. In this sense, it is possible to derive possible motivations that have been found particularly relevant to explain the phenomenon that can be studied with the case of Naiskodukaitse. Studies on other defence and combat groups have highlighted connection with the community as a possible factor (Schneckener, 2017), political reasons (Eggert, 2018), and values (Segal M. W., 1995). Other reasons have been addressed by Mankowski et al. (2015) and find a correlation with the study conducted by Kiili (2016) among women in the armed forces. These studies are used as a preliminary base to study women voluntary defence organizations to assess nowadays motivations. I expect to verify whether among the possible variables identified in the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, pp. 335-336)(Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992, pp. 335-336)and Segal's model (1995), the protective variable and the military variable will be the predominant ones and thus enabling me to identify the main motivation that can provide an answer to the research question. Due to that, the research aims to prove that willingness to defend and a patriotic sentiment are the reason why women join women voluntary defence organizations. Moreover, the gender approach seems suitable to focus on women's perspectives.

The research aims to examine the phenomenon in-depth to explore the motivations for women joining voluntary defence organizations. It is an explorative study because it aims not to provide a comprehensive study to determine why women join a voluntary defence organization. Rather, the study aims to identify the motivations to join by considering women who became members of the voluntary defence organization. The explorative type of the study fits with the qualitative method that the researcher aims to use, and data will be collected through interviews and a questionnaire with open-ended questions. The research design is a single case study of the Estonian Naiskodukaitse. It is an exceptionally insightful case to study the motivation of women to join voluntary defence organizations due to its longevity and uniqueness not only in the Baltic. Estonia is the only country among the Baltics that only partially dismissed the women's voluntary defence organization. Compared to the other Scandinavian organizations, some remained loyal to their historical tradition, as for the Swedish case, while others evolved into new organizations like the Finnish case. Moreover, a conspicuous increase in membership was primarily registered in Estonia. This further convinces the researcher that, although the Baltic and Scandinavian countries have a historical relationship with these female

organizations, Estonia, till nowadays, maintains a strong connection with Naiskodukaitse, thus enabling to study of the phenomenon better.

In developing this thesis, I attempted to explore in the first chapter how the renewed interest in voluntary female defence organizations has sparked a renewed interest in civil defence among the population. The civil defence will thus define, explaining its functions are areas of competencies. With limited prior research available, the paper explains what a voluntary defence organization is, the tasks and services provided and how these organizations differ from armed forces. In addition, I will discuss how women are positioned in security studies, giving an overview of their shift from being passive consumers of security to producers, meaning their growing involvement in the defence sector. Lastly, I will present the theoretical part on which this study is based. In the second chapter, I will discuss how the empirical part of the study was conducted, the method employed to collect data, the case justification and the study's limitations. Lastly, the third chapter provides the data analysis, and I will present the findings and then give final remarks in conclusion. As Clary, Snyder and Ridger (1992) have addressed, identifying women's motivations would also be highly beneficial for the organization. Studies on the attitudes of women to take part in voluntary defence organizations are necessary for small states to help decision-makers to tailor their policy better, allowing them to reach a broad audience, educate citizens about civic participation and paraps better explain why there is still a considerable gap between women and man joining the army.

1 Chapter 1: Women participation in civil defence

The following chapter begins by presenting the theoretical dimensions of the research, in particular, addressing how women have, during the years, positioned themselves as security providers, taking part in specific defence organizations.

I attend to clarify the core concepts used in this paper to investigate what motivates women to join voluntary defence organizations. I will refer to previous studies on other military groups to establish what scholars have observed, and I will try to address what has remained unexplored regarding women's voluntary defence organizations. Recently, there has been a renewed interest among people, and in this case among women, for voluntary defence organizations cannot be ignored and omitted in our discussion the historical link between civil defence. The first discussion will focus on defining what civil defence is and why it relates to the scope of our research. By the end of the second subchapter, the reader will be familiar with the research context. It could be easier to capture the essence of a voluntary defence organization and why it differs from other organizations within the military sphere. I will then address the gender element; the focus is explicitly focused on women. Therefore, I cannot omit to mention how gender determines gendered structures within military organizations, thus arguing that organizations are not gender neutral. In this logic, I look carefully not simply at voluntary defence organizations but at those that were specifically developed for women as a specific sub-group. This leads to further considerations of the merit of the new role of women when we discuss defence matters and if women's perception has shifted from being the object of security to being the subject.

After conceptualizing the main concepts, I will discuss the existing explanations scholars have suggested to identify motivations that drive women to join women's voluntary defence organizations. As already stated, the study aims not to explain why women join or not join. The scope of the study is to identify those motivations and, thus, why women are interested in joining.

Finally, I will extrapolate from previous studies regarding motivation to map existing explanations of women's motivation to join. I will contextualize this with the scope of the research. The aim is to find evidence of whether the same motivations, as highlighted in the literature consulted, drive women to become members of voluntary defence organizations.

1.1 Civil defence

The new global scenario provides with a continuous example regarding not only ongoing conflicts on why states should better engage in emergency preparedness, something that politicians and defence experts have been advocating (Cronqvist M, 2022). The scholars trace the development of civil defence during the Cold War period, demonstrating how this helped to ensure a “desirable future” (ibid, p. 26). This historical overview led to the assumption that civil defence was a phenomenon that developed during the Second World War and that remained in vogue till the Cold War period. Moreover, the study confirms a rekindled interest in civil defence and thus voluntary defence organizations. Nevertheless, the focus of my study moves away from a conceptualization that refers to that specific historical period. Instead, it is more central to the present, and places it within a very specific framework. By doing this, it is possible to discuss a regional phenomenon with a description that goes beyond mere historical analysis but approaches it as an element of the contemporary security policies of each country.

Moving on the attempt to discuss more in deep civil defence, drawing on the argument proposed by the Bjørnsson (Bjørnsson, 2022) and Alexander (Alexander, 2002) is a form of crisis management, meaning that national states designed civil defence as system to ensure that civilians could take part into several activities. This would have developed the necessary skills, aimed to ensure the safety of the population during critical scenarios. The definition highlights thus the need for citizens preparedness first and foremost. The concept, however, is wider than this, due to its strict connection with the element of social science and the idea of security (e.g., the security paradigm, and thus how to ensure, in a situation of crisis, efficiency, organization and preparation), but also the adherence and common sharing among the individuals of certain norms and values (Cronqvist, Farbøl, & Sylvest, 2022, p. 236-237). Overall McEnaney, when describing the American case, supports this view, and reflects on how civil defence was designed in an exceptional way, because it be described as a hybrid form of both military and civilian spheres (McEnaney, 2000, p. 5) . According to this program, it was essential to ensure that the civilians who were not directly involved in the front line of the conflict would have been prepared. Ordinary citizens, meaning that not only men but also women where targeted. It could be considered a new political process that, although it did not determine drastic changings since men were mainly in leading positions, it somehow open new opportunities for that generation of women (Scheibach, 2017). Two were the key elements, each family unit would have provided for its protection and enclosed important values that would foster this

willingness to be proactive in terms of defence (McEnaney, 2000, p. 70). Women were mainly the target of these programs; they had to be prepared to use the knowledge acquired in order to be useful not only for themselves but for their close ones and community (Scheibach, 2017, p. 118) .

Civil defence involved several areas, that Scheibach lists, such as communications, shelter, emergency welfare, transportation, supply and other supporting areas (ibid. pp84). Through the training courses, participants had the opportunities to specialize in each area and be able to perform the required duties. Moreover, it was not unusual to read sort of handbooks to educate civilians on how not to panic during crisis and be aware of what to do, providing answers to questions like “Who is Responsible for Civil Defense?”, or the type of services that each individual could join (ibid, this is civil defense pp100- 107). National governments aimed to preserve social order and avert a pervasive sense of fear among the society that would have led to more critical consequences in the advent of a crisis. Due to these reasons, civil defence was first of a strategy to form “desirable citizens” which led to my assumption that civil defence could be positioned in a broader vision of strengthening not only relations among these two actors but also a form of control, meaning that government would have predicted how the population would have reacted (due to their preparedness after the courses attended) (Björnsson, 2022, p. 45). To sum up, civil defence was all about preparedness!

Through the analysis of different realities, scholars argue that civil defence perhaps represents an indispensable element for achieving good performances in total defence (Larsson, 2020). The concept of total defence is a deterrence strategical solution to ensure protection of non-aligned nation against a potential aggressor, which comprehends not only the military dimension and in which civil defence is a fundamental component (Bērziņa, 2018). The two elements are directly connected and as explained by the author, civil defence is paraps the main pillar of total defence, since apart from military actions, civilians can coordinate themselves in order to avoid potential damages arising by not only a war but in any other catastrophic circumstances (ibid, p.78). The concept of total defence and, in which forms is delineated, can present some differences, and each country decides to implement in different ways (Berzina, 2020) (Wither , 2020) (Veebel, Ploom, Vihmand, & Zaleski, 2020). What seems to be the common element among these differences is focusing on civilian and how they should start to “embrace” more this proactive attitude towards personal and national defence, but on the other side, also develop a resilience society. The previous discourse can be perfectly

summarized by the quote “Resilience requires new strategies, capabilities and partnerships. Militaries are still relevant, but many critical requirements are civil” (Kramer, Binnendijk, & Hamilton, 2015) and in this sense, a resilient society can prevent and effectively react in times to new forms of threats that might pose a danger to the society.

Besides what is discussed above on the link between civil defence and total defence, civil defence organizations are responsible for dealing with the functions above discussed, and also playing a central role in “emotional management” (Biess, 2009). It has been demonstrated by scholars a connection between the sense of fear and anxiety and panic and the necessity cope with this fear (Björnsson, 2022, p. 28). From the previous statement, it is important to understand that fear was exploited to increase citizen interest in civil defence and hence increase their participation in these programs (ibid). Although the intention was to prepare the population to be able to cope with hypothetical disasters and crises, highly effective results were not frequently achieved. This suggests that public fear was intensified, causing a profound sense of uncertainty.

New critical scenarios (e.g., the outbreak of war or, in the 1950s, the nuclear threat) can potentially act as catalysts that would allow the re-emergence of a sense of fear and anxiety among the individuals, thus destabilizing the social order (Biess, 2009). Reports from NATO evidenced exactly why civil initiatives could be extremely helpful during critical situations, whether in response to efficient preparation, and timely and clear communication on what to do before and post-crisis (Björnsson, 2022). This has been seen in the case of a document produced by the local government to explain to citizens what to do in each scenario clearly. For example, the institution of the role of the warden, a volunteer that was in charge of instructing people within his/her community, sharing information, increasing awareness on the best measures to keep each family safe, or also having updated lists of the people under his/her supervision and all the necessary equipment needed (Scheibach, 2017). The same was the case for volunteers involved in the communication area to keep the communication from one center to another activity, and this was one area where women were particularly needed (ibid, p. 107). This proves that having no general information on how to act in these specific circumstances would have led to the spread of panic. However, such scenarios could have been avoided with a system perfected to minor details.

Moreover, considering the different tasks performed by civil defence organizations, it would be helpful to clarify what civil defence distinguished compared to the armed forces. While there is common agreement that both the civilian and military sphere would display their sources to solve a crisis, the type of crisis might represent a difference. Civil defence, as previously emphasized, was primarily about civilian preparedness to cope with a crisis, which evolved from preparation for foreign attack (e.g., World War II) or in the event of a nuclear bomb (e.g., during the Cold War period) stressing on the necessity to keep up the mood of the civilians and ensure civilian resilience. In the last years, the concept shifted toward a less militaristic idea and more toward providing support, for example, in case of natural disasters (Alexander, 2002) The advent of the war in Ukraine might have re-shifted the paradigm.

Compared to the armed forces, civil defence volunteers mainly perform their functions inside the country, while this is not always the case for the armed forces. The latter is not only in charge of defending the country and its population from a material threat but armed forces are also deployed as warfighters (e.g., armies that can carry out an attack and be sent on military missions outside their own country), peacekeepers (e.g. armies to prevent or stop critical scenario that might lead to conflicts), “firefighters” (e.g. armies that are essentially dealing with domestic issues such as emergency response and activities related with infrastructure development) and lastly police officers

(Shemella, 2006, p. 125-128). They can also be deployed for secondary duties, but the primary one remains homeland defence. Secondly, there is the economic aspect to consider. Professional soldiers are significantly more expensive to recruit, train and maintain than volunteers of a voluntary defence organization. Moreover, their professionalization is the result of highly trained professionals, while this is not the case for volunteers (Clark, 2014, p. 31-32)

To sum up, civil defence was defined as a security system developed by states to enable civilians to master the necessary skills and be capable of coping with crises. It was a hybrid system designed to spread knowledge in different areas such as communication, first aid, basic military knowledge, etc. Lastly, another critical function of civil defence is providing the necessary tools to cope with fear and anxiety due to critical scenarios.

Overall, the reflection study conducted by Cronqvist (2022) contributes to shaping our understanding of civil defence concerning voluntary defence organizations in deep detail by addressing the rehearsal of strategies for survival during a crisis, enforcing citizens' discipline

and "reshaping of societies" as primary aims that governments in Europe wanted to achieve. It does not fathom the essential role of motivations, enabling an evaluation of how the phenomenon evolved and whether it is possible to draw new lessons for the future. This still leaves undefined how voluntary defence organizations fit into the picture of various actors playing a role in civil defence. This is the task of the next section, which will provide a clear conceptualization of voluntary defence organizations

1.2 Voluntary defence organization

As evidenced by historical cases, civil defence tasks were performed by spontaneous voluntary defence organizations that citizens formed. For this reason, a more detailed account of what is a voluntary defence organization is given in the following section. I begin by adopting a general description of what an organization is in the sociological term. Then I identify voluntary defence organizations as a peculiar sub-category of voluntary organization; therefore, I focus on the "voluntary" element, meaning that individual motivation drives the person to become part of the organization. Then I consider specifically a voluntary defence organization that engages with defence and the characteristics that distinguish them from other types of organizations.

An organization is defined as a "*social system oriented to the attainment of a relatively specific type of goal, which contributes to a major function of a more comprehensive system, usually the society*" (Parsons, 1956, p. 63). Organizations are in this sense characterized by having a specific structure that can be analyzed by looking at the "cultural-institutional" aspect (i.e., how the values influence the organization and consequently its goal) and by looking at the function of the individual) (ibid, p.67). According to Talcott, knowing the core value of the organization provide some valuable guidelines and the backbone of the organization (ibid), values that are shared by the members. It follows the human agent, individuals that by sharing these core values will also be organized to fulfil the goal of the organization (ibid).

As was pointed out in this first general introduction, it is now possible to move further to what the focus of the research is all about, women in voluntary defence organizations, and thus approach these organizations by looking at the "type of goal" and understand in which way these differ according to the type, internal structure, purpose, impact or simply the procedures to become a member.

Voluntary organizations in general, not so much regarding the defence organizations, have been the object of interest among scholars. Although the findings are not specifically related to defence organizations, in principle, it could be argued that the results are applicable to voluntary defence organizations, especially regarding a preliminary discussion of the typology. The term voluntary organization is often overlapping with voluntary associations, which creates an umbrella where non-profit organizations, NGOs, and civil society organizations are all incorporated (Osborne, 2013). The focus however it is not only on the individual level of the volunteer that spontaneously decide to join, but also on the organizational level, how the organization work. These types of organizations are legally recognized, might be independent from the government, are not profit oriented, are “self-governing” and are defined by being voluntary (ibid, pp. 15).

As scholars argued, three main areas have been object of careful investigation: studies of organization as the primary subject, studies to address what is the final "outcome" for individuals who became members and finally, regarding what is the additional value that these voluntary organizations produce within the society (Amis & Stern, 1974). For the purpose of this research, the organization, but mostly its members are the subject of my inquiry.

Smith (1966) defined a voluntary organization as an organization where “*the majority of whose members are neither paid for participation in the organizations nor physically coerced into such participation*” (Amis & Stern, 1974, p. 91) and thus totally different from soldiers or conscripts. The main challenge in defining these organizations regards the term “*voluntary*” (ibid, p.91).

Among this general categorization of what is a voluntary organization, voluntary defence organizations represent a specific group. Currently, there is no definition. However, some criteria can be used to provide a definition.

Following the categorizations provided by Cnaan (1996), women have the ability to freely choose whether to join the organization and there is no coercion or obligation to volunteer (Cnaan, 1996). The second aspect is related to remuneration, the organization is no profit oriented and thus by joining, members are not expected to benefit from any sort of paid incentive (ibid). Another difference with armed forces is that members of voluntary defence organizations do not perform a job (except for those members who are employed). In addition, the organization should be formally organized to perform specific activities for its members, if

the organization is legitimate and thus recognized by the state while, for example, this is not applicable to other groups which act against the state or disrupt with their action the social order. Lastly, it is important to consider who are the beneficiaries. In this sense, the primary object of security is without doubt the state and mostly these organizations are established to ensure it to act according to the constitutional order (ibid) but also the society, meaning that it is not possible to consider organizations that provide security for only a specific target Lastly, the organization is legitimate and thus recognized by the state.

From the official documents, a voluntary defence organization is a military and state defence organization under the control of the Minister of Defence whose main aims are to contribute to increasing "people's willingness to defend" and maintain order (Kaitseliit, n.d.). Usually, these organizations have demonstrated civilians' willingness to contribute to the defence of their nation, in which the organization, in contrast with the regular defence forces, rely exclusively on the voluntaristic will of the individual, but also works with professional staff to train the members (Van Lente, 2022). In line with functions performed by civil defence organizations, women's voluntary defence organizations are organized to perform warning, evacuation, management of shelters, rescue, medical service, and other types of assistance (ICRC, 1949) in (Marcinko, 2022, p. 326).

What is remarkable in Estonia is how civil defense is seen, with an attempt to build a link between citizens and the military sector, which would contribute to defence while also creating societal values and public interest in the topic (Stejskal, 2015).

Studies have proven that voluntary organizations are "*oriented primarily to satisfactions of members deriving from group activity itself*", meaning that the emphasis is focused more on what Talcott described as an *individual's hierarchy of needs* (Amis & Stern, 1974, p. 95). However, there is no common understanding regarding a typology. It has been suggested a theory that could use three criteria; *accessibility of membership* (e.g., high and low accessibility), *the status of the associations* (which is defined as the capacity to concede prestige or receive) and *the function performed by the organization* (Gordon & Babchuk, 1959, p. 26-27). Indeed, the term voluntary is central to highlighting that individuals freely choose to join the organization, which leads to another substantial typology that classifies organizations composed of "voluntary group" and organizations that also operate with paid members. Moreover, social features of voluntary organizations point at the *association variable*, meaning that those who decide to join the organization will be motivated by the same interest (e.g., in

the case of Naiskodukaitse members might be willing to increase the security of the country), *voluntariness variable*, each person is not obliged to join and bounded to remain in the organization if it does not “fit” in it anymore, *volunteer work* (e.g. members are asked to contribute in the organizations of events during the year but they do not receive any compensation for this work), *democracy variable*, open to the participation of members (e.g. each board is democratic elected among members), *autonomy variable* the organization has no external control and there is an intermediate structural position, meaning that the organization encloses element of private and governmental organizations (Horch, 1994, p. 220-221).

Voluntary organizations can additionally be defined according to the functions they perform. For instance, Minnis (1951) refers to the function of *"meeting the human need"* (Amis & Stern, 1974, p. 95). In the case of a voluntary defence organization, although women do not feel or want to join the armed forces, they still perceive this necessity of acquiring the necessary preparation and training to overcome every possible scenario. Indirectly, without a formal commitment to the army, they are supporting national defence in different forms that can vary from spreading security information, engaging in combat lines, keeping the society active, and so on.

By closely analyzing the previous works, scholars have listed the primary functions, which can be enclosed in *goal attainment, socialization, support to established institutions, allocation of power and influence, social integration and social change* (ibid, p.95-96), although these functions listed above are not manifested in all types of organizations.

Clark and Wilson (1961, in Amis 1974, p.95) have based their assumption on "incentives" that the organization provides to its members, which can be differentiated into *"solidarity" and "purposive"*.

Interest is used to defy another typology, whether this can be socio-economic, only devoted to the social aspect or leisure activities (Goldschmidt, 1947, in ibid, p-95). On the same assumption of Goldschmidt, the organization can be differentiated according to who is the recipient, either the general population, particular social groups or individual interest (Bell et al., 1956; ibid, p.95).

To conclude, I have presented a typology of a voluntary defence organization, providing some guidelines and the reasons why it differs from others form of organizations and armed groups. Based on the discussion above, a voluntary defence organization is an organization where members, in this case, women, can voluntarily join without any obligation or coercion.

Secondly, members do not benefit from any form of compensation. It is formally organized to perform activities that enhance the preparedness and military knowledge of its members and enable them to cope with critical situations. Moreover, the organization is recognized by the state

1.3 Women as security providers

I will now narrow the scope of the analysis to the gender element, since the topic is on voluntary organizations specifically created for women. I will first discuss how women are positioned within security studies and the implication that gender has on a defence organization. The aim is to focus the attention on women and make them visible in the study, broaden the discussion on women in civil defence and consider their motivations to join these specific organizations. Women should be visible concerning defence and security studies. This is due to general absence of women in security studies due to historical factors, with a tradition of male predominance that has excluded women, in addition with gender stereotypes and lack of representation and their continuous underrepresentation.

Security studies have often neglected women's role and, as noted by Enloe (2000), they have been portrayed as objects rather than the subject (People & Vaughan-Williams, 2020). Before the two World War Conflicts, women had never been "authorized agents of security", meaning that women had to rely on others for their personal security, and therefore been considered till recent days "passive consumers" (Eichler, 2018, p. 162). By focusing on women, scholars have challenged the previous debate regarding security without excluding women but including their narratives, discussing security from different and alternative points (Mehta & Wibben, 2020). A clear example of this can be the link to the gendered idea that men are responsible for saving and defending women, who were directly associated with the homeland and thus guardians of values such as family, element of national identity like culture and tradition, constructing around men the gendered "identity of the protector" (Ase, 2018, p. 274). It has been demonstrated that women's presence in defence and military organizations increased exponentially, but without holding prominent positions; indeed, women were designed with supportive roles such as field auxiliaries, nurses, and only in a few cases, combatants (Eichler, 2018). Indeed, Enloe (1983) argues that women have been actively engaged in armed conflicts and resistance movements, undermining the presupposition that they merely perform "invisible

jobs” (Whitworth, 2018, p. 79). At the same time, offensive organizations have not been the only viable option for women to provide their agency; women have also considered different opportunities and one example are voluntary defence organizations, that are more oriented toward the defensive posture rather than the offensive one.

However, since this is a defence organization, and therefore entirely related to the military, it is necessary to broaden the discussion on how the military environment and organisations themselves are gendered. I will refer specifically to the term gender rather than sex, which are two distinctive concepts. While sex is understood in a biological term, meaning physical characteristics that distinguish males from females, gender refers to a social construct. Referring to something as gendered means that we are attributing an identity, more feminine or masculine, that is the result of cultural roles, and social expectations enclosed within a society on how individuals should perform according to their gender (People & Vaughan-Williams, 2020). This being said, scholars have defined organizations also adopting a gendered perspective, meaning that gender, in stressing masculinity and femininity characteristics, have an important role in shaping the structures of the organizations, and how each individual will perform within (Carreiras, 2006). Moreover, the importance of gender negatively affects social hierarchies between females and males (Sjoberg, 2009). By this being said, in regards with military organizations and in this case, voluntary defence organizations, the idea of a gendered organization as defined by Britton (2000, in Carreiras, 2006), presents a clear implication for assessing that organizations are not neutral and the difference between masculinity and femininity are instead accentuated. This means that if one considers a military organization that is predominately composed of men, the structure of this organization will be based on male characteristics, and this also determines a certain influence on the power relations within it. This implies that everything related to defence is identified with an image of strength and masculinity. This has influenced the image itself of the soldier, portrayed as a strong man in charge of defending the nation and its citizens

In this sense, when we use the term gendered organization, the implication is that gender has a strong influence on the initial social structure, which then determines the prejudices that influence and produce inequality between members. (Acker, 2012). This means that gender determines roles, positions or activities that are considered more appropriate for a man or a woman to perform within a given organization. It therefore seems 'natural' to think of organizations as gendered, especially on a cultural level, in which, in their daily practices, they

continue to reproduce this gender differentiation. (Britton & Logan, 2008). For example, as a hierarchically masculine environment, the military sphere has determined specific national policies, (e.g., the compulsory military conscription of men and the exclusion of women, or the language adopted using expressions such as 'women soldier, which does not fully recognize their role.') (Eichler, 2018). The soldier's identity has thus been shaped by "othering" women and their exclusion from the military sphere. Therefore, the predominant narrative emphasizes this gendered distinction, according to which everything perceived as feminine must be protected, creating a social order in which inequality between men and women is legitimized. For this reason, the woman would not be an appropriate subject to fulfil this role, which is why the existence of separate organizations suggests a sort of necessity for women to claim spaces and roles that have been denied to them. This would tend to reject this pacifist vision of women as subjects to be protected at all costs (Eichler, 2018). Finally, considering women's voluntary defence organizations, it should be important to consider whether these organizations are gendered only in form, meaning that there is a genuine interest in gathering women who share the same interest and goal to increase security, and therefore proving that being a woman is not a limitation. Although they have always been associated with auxiliaries' roles, I believe the necessity to have a female organization is not correlated to an unconscious implementation of gender roles.

Indeed, this gendered identity of men, as the only security providers, started to shift when the distinction between the battlefield and the home front blurred; in this situation, gender was not entirely a discriminant for the role that women had to perform (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 109) and it is connected with the previous discussion of women joining civil defence. As argued by Whitworth (2018), the default construction of security issues as gender-neutral perpetuates an outdated understanding of security and its implications on different actors, men and women. The importance of also including female's narrative in security studies has a double significance, first, it confers visibility to marginalized voices and second, it provides a thorough knowledge of the subject. Ignoring certain groups, and in this case women, might result in biases and inaccuracies in political analysis, thus undermining the overall degree of success of security and political strategies. For example, the inclusion of women in the security environment broke the co-dependency of women towards men and inaugurated a passage of cooperation, it was not only a service that they were performing for enhancing the security of their country, but it became a duty and later on it led the path to a professional career. By fulfilling critical roles, they reached a new awakening and how it was demonstrated it became

an opportunity to construct a new identity, from protected to security providers. For this reason, understanding a women's voluntary defence organization and the experience of the individuals within, can broaden with a different angle the discussion, shed light on unique perspectives and take them into account.

To sum up, although the limited presence of women in security studies due to historical factors, with a tradition of male predominance that has excluded women, gender stereotypes and lack of representation and their continuous underrepresentation, women are trying to acquire visibility. In this sense, it is possible to observe that women participate in civil defence, although the phenomenon is not discussed in the academic literature. Moreover, civil defence organizations are specifically created to admit women. Their coexistence with other defence organizations implies that gender is involved, perhaps in what motivates women to join female organizations. It merits further investigations to determine the motivations of those who join women's voluntary defence organizations.

1.4 Existing explanation on women's motivation to join defence organizations

Against the background of most of the literature that focuses on men, I intend to present some cases on other armed and combat groups that do not present the same characteristic discussed in the voluntary defence organizations section but deal with women. This would be helpful to move from an abstract section of the theory, and it will provide some practical examples for the reader, addressing possible reasons why women have joined.

According to recent research, it is common to observe women actively participating in defence units and combat groups, demonstrating that they may be involved in violent settings. The literature suggests that when it comes to motivation, one interesting example is provided by studies on militias and paramilitary groups and, on a general level, could also find implications for my study.

Usually, members who join militias have a strong connection with their community and thus, they become members voluntarily or due to coercion (Schneckener, 2017). If one considers women, other influencing variables can be the young age of the participants, previous relations with an armed group, active participation in civic society or other types of movements, and personal and political reasons (Eggert, 2018). From this first analysis, it emerges that women

share similar motivations with men, and there would not be a clear differentiation. On the contrary, studies conducted on paramilitary organizations evidenced that women's motivations arise from political events and willingness to contribute to conflict resolution, a perceived sense of threat for their community or due to a personal link with a member of the organizations (e.g., husband, brother, etc.) (McEvoy, 2019) (McEvoy, 2009) (Potter, 2014). It additionally demonstrated considerable participation and distribution of roles among men and women. This undermines the gendered nature of paramilitary organizations, suggesting women's attitude to challenge gender norms and stereotypes, moving from the idea of gender-specific motivations. It undermines the stereotype that women are not suited to defence roles, although women involved in paramilitary organizations were often portrayed as terrorists (Eggert, 2018), having the consequence of undermining their role compared to men. For this reason, it was essential to investigate if being accepted as a member of the paramilitary organization elevated women to an equal position with men or if gender rules were maintained (McEvoy, 2019). The result emphasized compliance with male characteristics; female members of paramilitary organizations shared with men this sense of duty and willingness to defend their community (ibid), meaning that gender-specific motivations might not have any influence, both within organizations that are mixed and only female ones.

Moving on to armed forces, motivations seem to be more gender-neutral, since there was a correlation between women's willingness to be a soldier and shared values with the organization and the mission (Segal M. W., 1995). If the personal and organizational values are similar, women are expected to participate in national defence (ibid). Another reason is the chance for better opportunities to develop practical skills because it represents a way to deal with a precarious economic situation, and in several studies conducted among the American population, joining the armed force represents an alternative to continuing the studies (Mankowski, Tower, Brandt, & Mattocks, 2015). Another explanation that could be in line with voluntary defence organizations is related to the type of experiences offered to the members (ibid), meaning, for example, learning how to use different weapons, camouflage tactics and so on, that members of a voluntary defence organization can learn, competencies that would be reserved only to soldiers.

Lastly, and this will provide additional support for this research, studies on Estonian women who are now soldiers of the Estonian Defence Force (EDF), have evidenced strong correlations

with the study conducted by Mankoswki et al. (2015). Another interesting variable demonstrates that members who had high patriotic levels, sense of duty and members who had family or close friends involved in a military setting, or have attended school courses on military defence or lastly, had experiences with youth organizations that promoted patriotic values, have been more inclined to choose a military career (Kiili, 2016).

To conclude, this last section presented the core theoretical structure of the research. In particular, according to the literature, several motivations have been addressed; a perceived sense of threat, political events, social connection with the organization, patriotism, willingness to defend and opportunities to develop practical skills. Although all of these might play a role in motivating women to join voluntary defence organizations, the empirical study and the data analysis will provide further insights regarding which are applicable, and which is the main one.

The following chapter will present the methodological method applied to the study, and further information on the data collection will be revealed to the reader.

1.5 A combined approach to explain motivation to become a member of a voluntary defence organization

The following section will address the theoretical base for the research, explaining what motivates women to join voluntary defence organizations. The section proceeds with a general explanation of motivation, followed by an attempt to circumscribe the motivations of women in regard to civil defence. Motivation is central to the defence organizations to ensure new members, and it represents a challenge in reaching out to the individual so that the defence organization can promote its values and objectives to a broader target group.

When it is posed the question, "*What motivated you to become a member of a defence organization?*", the answers that one might expect do not only involve a single motivation. Instead, motivations are usually the result of a mix of "pushes" that can be considered a sense of need (e.g., the individual is treated by something) and "pulls" (e.g., the sense of protection). As argued by Russell (1971), motivation appears to be an "internal force" that drives actions and how to implement these actions toward the final (Pardee, 1990, p. 3) or moreover, a "decision making process" (Aldag, 1979, in Pardee, 1990, p. 3). If human behaviours are considered, it is useful to understand why individuals perform or act according to a certain pattern, allowing the study to answer the research question. Among the different sociological

approaches present in the academic debate, scholars have previously identified typologies of motivations that led individuals to become involved in voluntary organizations. The first typology concerns “*social exchange*” which translates into an expectation that by performing a certain action (e.g., volunteering in a defence organization and thus dedicating my time to the organizations by participating in training) the individual will gain something (e.g. knowledge on how to behave in case of emergency (Blau, 1986, p. 178). This theory of social exchange has been applied to the study of voluntary organizations, and it has been argued that since individuals are rational, they will act in order to achieve the greater benefit for themselves based on what on a scale on values, they consider to be the most important things (e.g., protection of children/family, contribute to the defence of the country, patriotic sentiment and so on). The second typology considers “*incentives*”, such as material incentives (e.g., salary) (Clark & Wilson, 1961, p. 134), solidarity incentives (e.g. new friendships, socialization, sense of belonging) (ibid, p. 134) and finally purposive incentives which concern more the organization’s purposes and not the members (e.g. spread security practices among members) (ibid, p. 135-136).

Lastly, individual’s motivation can be explained according to the fulfilment of “*needs*”, which are physiological (Maslow, 1943, p. 4), safety (ibid, p.6), social (ibid, p.9), self-esteem and self-actualization (ibid, p.10).

Moving forward, the functional approaches and the Segal’s model (1995) are considered particularly useful to explore women’s motivations. The former encloses the previous typologies discussed and provides valuable applicability, although it generically provides a toolkit to scrutinize the social and psychological mechanisms that according to Katz (1960) trigger, guide and maintain individual’s actions (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Values seem to have a relevant role in driving the individual to perform a certain action (Quinones, 2019, p. 10) and most importantly, by choosing that specific organization, individuals will be intended to fulfil their needs (Coursey et al., 2011, in ibid, p. 11). The latter instead, tackle down the phenomenon go in deep with organizations that focus on defence, meaning that, Segal’s model can certainly contribute to suggest possible motivations that are tailored specifically on women.

A first attempt to understand women’s motivation to take part in voluntary defence organizations can use the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992, pp. 335-336). The functional theory is critical in this sense, since the assumption suggests that people will adopt similar behaviors but, and here is the most important aspect, for different

reasons, that may not be that deducible and taken for granted. If one assumes that women take part in voluntary defence organizations only due to enhance security levels of their home countries, this hypothesis seems partially reductive, as it would not explain why specifically voluntary organizations and not, for example to embrace the military career. There is a possibility that, in line with the functional approach, multiples motivations beside the desire to serve their home country can concur to influence women's willingness to join voluntary defence organizations.

The Volunteer Functions Inventory identify six potential motivations.

The first motivation is *values*, and it aims to understand the perception of the organization's goal, whether there is an interest towards the receiving target, whether there is a sense of fulfilment from performing the activities, etc. (e.g., investigate whether women who join also values patriotic values, cultural values, are concerned about the security situation of their countries) (ibid, p.336).

The second motivation is *understanding*; as one of the main assumptions listed and which I think perfectly encapsulates the scope of this variable, joining the voluntary organization helps to "gain a new perspective on things" (ibid, p. 336). This is perhaps linked with the personal attitude towards learning a new skill and thus leading to personal growth.

The third is *career*, and contrary to the previous factors, the individual is motivated to learn something that can be re-invested to increase job opportunities and career growth (ibid, p.336). Follows the *social variable*, which helps to assess whether the influence of others has contributed to fostering the interest in joining the organization (ibid, p.336). *Esteem variable* instead addresses how joining a voluntary organization the individual benefits in terms of self-esteem and thus a sense of fulfilment (ibid, p.337).

Lastly, the *protective variable*, according to which the membership helps the individual to maintain a sense of control, overcome personal problems (ibid, p. 336) and thus have a positive impact on his/her life. If we consider the case studies, these variables seem interconnected with one another. One might assume that, in terms of values and protective variables, women who decide to take part in civil defence and thus join a voluntary defence organization, might have in common a shared value of patriotism that influences their willingness to contribute to making their countries safer. Same supposition regarding career and understanding variables, meaning that women will better understand the security condition of the country, being more aware of how to contribute on a personal level, leading them to be more motivated to attend different courses offered by the organization to enhance their basic military preparation for example. Lastly, in terms of esteem, feeling that as a member, they have the competencies to

overcome every situation due to the skills they have developed should create a sense of empowerment. Moreover, in terms of social values, sharing the same experience with others might act as a pole of attraction to recruit new members.

In addition to that, I will consider Segal's study, in which she tries to map the factors that influence women's participation in the armed forces by developing her theory (Segal, 1995). Although I recognize that the study is more tailored to capturing motivations that could explain women in the armed forces, I assume that the variables evidenced by Segal might fit this study. Segal's model is structured on three main variables.

The first is the *military variables* that involve the combination of other "sub variables" such as the *national security situation*, meaning that the more they will feel in danger, the more they will decide to take an active role as security providers (ibid, p.760-762), *military technology* meaning that having weapons that can "easily" used by women somehow reduce this sense of not feeling capable of performing military roles and thus to develop the necessary skills and ability (ibid, p.762-764). Follow the *combat-to-support ratio*, meaning that women's involvement will always be affected by the type of opportunities available for them, mostly supporting roles rather than combat ones (ibid, p.764-765). Then, the *type of force structure*, meaning that higher the use of reservists to perform support functions, higher will be the number of women in the reserves (ibid, p.765). Lastly, *military accession policies* mean that there will be a higher level of women in systems with a voluntary accession system rather than those systems that adopt a recruitment system (ibid, p.765-766).

The second variable that influences women's participation is *social structure*, which involves *demographic patterns* meaning that provide higher possibilities for women when men are not enough to fulfil the military target (ibid, p.766).

Follow *labour force characteristics*, meaning that the more the society is open to having women employed in different occupations, the less reluctance the society to have women in defence sectors (ibid, p.766-767).

Lastly, their involvement is determined by *economic factors and family structure*, meaning that society still has a conservative idea of the family, where the woman is the main responsible for taking care of the children and other basic functions, the fewer chances there will be for her to find time and space (ibid, p.767- 768).

Finally, the last variable is *culture*. It relates to gender and, it is important to mention that whether the society is gendered, women will be less likely to be involved in the military sector (ibid, p.768).

When applied to voluntary defence organizations, the model would help evaluate whether this security, cultural and social variables are interrelated or not and if they have the same impact. For example, in a critical situation in which women perceive this sense of threat that can be directed to them specifically or loved ones and their country, they are more willing to engage in civil defence practices. Social and cultural factors might not be so predominant, but I assume that might have a certain impact on their decision to choose an organization that is designed and tailored for women and women only, meaning that the organization is perceived as a "safe environment".

To conclude, I discussed what motivation is, and I have briefly addressed several approaches that scholars have structured concerning possible explanations that drive human motivations to perform certain actions, regarding the case study, join a voluntary defence organizations. I started with a general sociological discussion, presenting three main arguments. Motivations can be explained according to a rational theory of "social exchange", "incentives" and "needs" but the functional approach, instead of the Volunteer Functions Inventory and Segal's model, I assume that combined, these two theories might provide a comprehensive explanation. From the two models, it is possible to derive a set of motivations that seems more convincing on why women become members of voluntary defence organizations. These motivations are related to patriotic values, military/security, and social and esteem motivations. However, I do not exclude that the empirical case might evidence the other motivations discussed. As outlined, the functional theory presents a general understanding of potential variables that might explain motivations to join general organizations. Segal's model, instead, is specifically focused on women and not general individuals, and should allow tackling the phenomenon, suggesting several possible motivations that are moving from the military career, can be applicable to a defence organization.

2 Chapter 2: Methodology

The following chapter will present the methodological approach adopted to answer the research questions, case justification and, thus, why Naiskodukaitse represents an appropriate case in relation to the study of the phenomenon. Moreover, I discuss how the data were collected for the empirical analysis and the research limitations.

2.1 Research design and method

This study adopts a single case study as its research design.

In this sense, a single case study can provide an in-depth analysis and thus a comprehensive examination of the studied phenomenon, in this case, motivations that drive women to join a voluntary defence organization. Secondly, the single case study can provide an additional understanding of the related setting where the phenomenon is manifested, in this case Estonia, meaning that it could be possible to assess certain specific dynamics that influence the case. Moreover, by focusing on a single case study, the study can provide empirical evidence, in this case, preliminary notions on what are the motivations for which women join a voluntary defence organization, that would path the way for further studies and perhaps a wider exploratory study of what then really determines whether women join or not a voluntary defence organization.

As the primary aim of the research is to identify women's motivations to take part in voluntary defence organizations, in this case in Naiskodukaitse, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate option to capture the individual-level of motivations of the members. Indeed, qualitative inquiries enable the researcher to present a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the topic, engaging directly with the primary actors and allowing them to share their stories and thus avoiding any preconceived assumption(Creswell, 2013).

Since the research question emerged by observing the outcome that an international event (the conflict in Ukraine) produced in a regional setting, Estonia (i.e., how within a few months, there a considerable increase of women was who decided to join a female voluntary defence organization, the Naiskodukaitse), the approach is explorative. As argued by Smith (2004), the observation of reality allows to better engage with a specific actor, and doing so, provides a greater chance to engage with the protagonist's stories, developing realistic representations of their individuality (della Porta & Keating, 2008) which for this study can imply shed the light on a topic that have poorly been the subject of research from scholars.

By trying to make sense of this phenomenon, the motivations that drive women to join voluntary defence organizations, we implicitly include how the target actors, women, suggest meanings of their behaviours, including elements of society and cultures (ibid). This means to understand, for example whether it is possible to trace if certain conservative values have or had a central role in motivating their actions or if, because why are specifically inquiring about a female defence organization, any social constraints can be spotted. The answer to the research question will provide literature with an explanation of the social phenomenon by addressing women's motivations for their actions; however, regarding how this study can enrich the literature, I concord with Della Porta and Keating's (2008) statement that it paves the way and suggest an approach for the study and analysis of future or similar cases.

Regarding the research's time frame, the study's data were collected cross-sectional. This strategy represented an important advantage for the study for several reasons; the data collection was completed relatively faster than a longitudinal approach because the purpose of the study was not to trace how motivations changed concerning the war. Moreover, lower cost to conduct the study, followed by greater control regarding the measurement that was restricted over the two months the information was gathered.

Although cross-sectional appeared to be the best choice for the study and the time available for further research, a longitudinal strategy might reveal different data, thus providing different patterns.

2.2 Case selection

The case selected for the study is the Estonian women's voluntary defence organization, Naiskodukaitse. The study thus aims to explore women's motivations to join this organization.

Naiskodukaitse (Women Home Defence) is a particularly insightful case to study women's motivation to join such organizations because the secular structure's uniqueness and its historical past represent a distinguishing characteristic as the only one of its kind in the Baltic region. Moreover, and what is notable of remark, no comparable organization with similar characteristics created explicitly for women has been found in neighbouring countries such as Latvia or Lithuania. This distinctive element is worth considering because countries with a similar socio-economic and political situation due to the oppressive regime established during the Soviet occupation would suggest that a similar organization would also be present.

Moreover, if one considers Estonia specifically, it is fascinating that a similar structure is still active in a country that is a NATO member and, especially before the events of the 24th of February 2022, that a similar organization is capable of attracting interest and new members every year. Due to the pauper evidence addressed by the scholars on studies on voluntary defence organizations and missing the conceptual framework on voluntary defence organizations entirely, I was further convinced of the need for a greater investigation of an organization of this kind.

This is important to clarify why societies and countries with lower populations have developed these types of organizations and what is exactly the contribution that women can provide to strengthening civil defence and national security.

Moreover, not entirely similar organizations are also present in Scandinavian countries. However, for a preliminary study on a woman voluntary defence organization, it might seem more reasonable and puzzling to discuss the Estonian case because, as mentioned before, it is the only organization present in the Baltic and because of its small size, Estonia is reliant on women participation in civil defence which should provide a context for understand the motivations. Moreover, in this context, the motivations might be different compared to a different setting (e.g., Scandinavian countries) and in societies that do not share the same historical past and thus might perceive their engagement with a defence organization more as an additional extra activity, and thus less valued. Also, regarding the other organizations, scarcity of available information would have increased difficulties in accessing the participants and increased time expenditure in data collection, while Estonia seemed more in line with the scope of my research and a feasible location to overcome the above-cited limitations. In addition, having the chance to meet in person participants and members of the board helped me to establish a better connection and, probably the most important thing, having lived in Estonia and thus having knowledge about their culture and history, having interacted with the people, further seemed beneficial for a better understanding of the reality and the phenomenon.

For readers who are not familiar with the settings of the study, Naiskodukaitse was created on the image of the Finnish Lotta-Svard in 1920 (Naiskodukaitse, n.d.). By the end of 1926, several units were created, and in 1927 the organization was included as a special unit of the Kaitseliit (ibid). Naiskodukaitse was in charge of the active support of the Kaitseliit and thus, it was necessary to adequately train the members to perform professional activities for the organization (Naiskodukaitse, 1939, p. 11)

The organization was open to all Estonian women aged 18; the decision to become a member was voluntary, but the members had obligations and duties to fulfil (ibid, p. 14).

It was not possible to perform specific tasks without adequate knowledge and, for this reason, the Central Committee decided to develop and implement classes on domestic economy until they organized special trainings first for the chairwomen of each district (ibid, p. 19). First courses were focused on propaganda, public speaking and planning of events (ibid), were not only functional to acquire practical skills but, first and foremost, to promote a sense of community (ibid, p. 23). Later on, the congress recognized the importance of establishing also courses on different subjects more related to real life needs such as notions of medicine, catering, economy and logistics/equipment (ibid, p. 23). The latter was an essential task for the Kaitseliit to supply them with equipment and uniforms (ibid, p. 28), as well as collecting funds through parties, lotteries and other events to support the work of the Kaitseliit (ibid, p.29). Another element was to favour physical education among the members in order to fulfil their auxiliary tasks in times of emergency (ibid, p. 30). Lastly, work of propaganda and national cultural activities have been pursued by the organization (e.g., handcrafting of folk costumes, lectures on several topics such as history of the nation and its geography, or educating and promoting national values, organizing celebrations on national holidays with songs and folk dances) (ibid, p. 32-33- 34).

Moreover, the driving force for Naiskodukaitse is found in the “eesti naise hinges” meaning the soul of Estonian woman that was devoted to contributing, sacrificing and assisting (ibid, p. 36); secondly, a strong nationalism and finally, a sense of democracy that led these women from different social classes to work together (ibid, p.36).

By the summer of 1940, after the coup and Soviet occupation, the organizations that composed the EDL were considered as “anti-national organizations” and thus it had to cease its existence (Kass, 2020). Only in the early 90s, and once more, when Estonia restored its independence, Naiskodukaitse was restored. The first attempt was made in Järvakandi but it was only on the 20th of September 1991 that in Tartu, a group of ladies composed of Dagmar Mattiisen, Maarika Heinmann, Asta Luksepp and Silva Tamre re-formed the organization. After this, several events were organized, the organization legally adopted its statutes and rules of procedure, and from 2003, Naiskodukaitse was also included and thus formally recognized as a part of the Defence League (Naiskodukaitse, s.d.).

This being said, the official re-establishment of a woman voluntary defence organization in Estonia immediately after the restoration of their independence presents a significant milestone in the perspective of the study. First of all, it represents that society publicly accepts and recognizes women's capacity to engage and have an active role in national defence and security, which might contradict established gender roles and conventions, especially in the military environment. This is important because it can foster gender equality policies and contribute to a more inclusive approach to security research by including women's experiences and their insights to challenge older paradigms.

A second element remarks the necessity to include civil society further when discussing security issues. Through these types of voluntary organizations, it might become easier to increase civil-military relations, avoiding a dismissive attitude towards the military environment from the female section of the population. At the same time, voluntary defence organization demonstrates their interest in preserving and strengthening national security. Due to the strategic importance of maintaining and properly training these organizations, new strategies should be developed to include these “informal” actors in the debate. Lastly, the Estonian case might disclose lessons to learn for other countries that adopt a similar approach regarding civil society and security.

2.3 Collecting data

The base of the study involved the necessity to conduct semi-structured interviews and, secondly a questionnaire. Interviews are a model of inquiry, meaning that the method will require direct engagement with the participant. Moreover, measuring motivation represents a challenge; it cannot be observed directly and due to this, scholars have measured it in relative terms (Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2014), meaning that it is not possible to provide parameters like quantity, amount etc; which led the researcher to exclude a quantitative approach. Indeed, by having the individual (e.g., female members of an organization), depth interviews provide a better understanding of the respondent's viewpoint. For a field like security and military study, giving women a chance to position themselves in a specific context can only help us discover and better tackle the research puzzle of this paper and enrich the existent debate on the role of women in defence forces.

As argued by Fielding & Thomas (2001), semi-structured interviews help me to have more flexibility during the interviews; the aim was to engage in a meaningful conversation, giving

me a chance to the respondent to feel comfortable to answer my questions without any pressure and for me to better adapt the order of the questions according to the responses received but also to focus on determined aspects (Blakeley, 2013, p. 160). For example, to create a more natural and open conversation with the respondent, I rearranged the question's original order if, during the previous answer, the respondent had unconsciously discussed another topic of my interest but that was not connected with the next question. This allowed me to facilitate a more dynamic and natural conversation and when necessary, to ask for further clarifications. Another important aspect was to show additional preparation regarding the structure of the interviews, their core values, the history of the organization and natural curiosity about their world and their social engagement in terms of security. I believed this was highly beneficial for the study because of the great information I gained besides my original research question, and, from their stories, I was indeed able to gain a clear and comprehensive view of the organization within the Estonian defence system.

I collected 13 interviews, both online and in person, with senior and junior members of the organizations. In addition to that, 34 respondents submitted their answers in written form through the online questionnaire.

Regarding the sampling criteria, it is purposive sampling, meaning that the participants have been selected on the basis of specific characteristics that are relevant and necessary for the purpose of the research. Therefore, the following criteria have been applied: Estonians senior members who joined the organization before the war in Ukraine started, Estonians junior members who joined after the war in Ukraine and finally non-Estonians who have been members of the organizations. The data were collected among respondents from different districts, mainly Estonian speakers, but there is no evidence of non-Estonian who participated in the research. Other information regarding the respondents is presented in a final annexe.

The first step was to re-establish contact with former members from the district of Tartu interviewed the previous year for a pilot study. Some of them gladly accepted to collaborate on the new research project. The most important challenge was related to trust in order to reach a bigger sample. Therefore, I tried to establish cooperation with the organization. Each sub-district of the voluntary defence organization around the country had to receive formal approval from Tallinn before answering my invitation and substantially deciding whether they wished to collaborate or not to the study. The project for formally subject to a general approval by the Tallinn general board, demonstrating a hierarchical structure within the organization.

This simply means that thanks to a valuable acquaintance within the Tartu district, I was introduced to the Tallinn Vice-President of the organization, and this further helped me to present myself to board members, discuss the scope of my research, explain how I was planning to conduct the research and why it would have been valuable not only for the academic debate but also for the organization.

This being clarified, I became aware that the initial reluctance to receive responses was motivated by their necessity to conduct a preliminary security check and this was helpful to further prove my trustworthiness meaning that the information will be used for the purpose stated.

Various themes were discussed during the interviews, including the women's NKK identities, the factors that led to their decision to join the organization, their personal experiences of discovering NKK, and their reasons for remaining committed to it. The interviews were designed to allow participants to tell their own stories freely and spontaneously about their positions within the organization, their chosen speciality, and their experiences participating in activities with other members. The researcher was also curious about the potential influence of family members, loved ones, friends, or acquaintances who were members of the Estonian Defense Forces or the Estonian Defense League.

The data collection and the follow-up fieldnotes transcription ensured that, starting from my initial research question and related to the themes extrapolated from the literature consulted, I developed a coherent understanding of the phenomenon and I proceeded with the analysis.

The interviews were immediately transcribed in order not to lose important information and once the transcriptions were ready and the answer from the questionnaire had been collected, I organized the data according to each question. This provided a clear picture of the respondents' answers, after which it followed an interpretation of the main findings. The method used was a thematic analysis that, as argued by Fereday&Muir-Cochrane (2006), represents a "search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" (Swain, 2018, p. 5). From the questions, I tried to capture some general information regarding how the respondents discovered the organization and then, more specifically, regarding the main motivations that might have been derived from military interest, security concern, social relations and connection with the organization, values, increase of self-esteem or others not considered. The motivations that emerged from the data have been compared with those that emerged from the two theoretical models discussed in the first chapter to check whether there

was compatibility. Due to that, the variables that emerged from the interviews were dichotomous, either specifically mentioned by the respondents or not.

Based on the current research project, if one considers the findings that emerged from members who joined the organization during the last months, or even immediately after the 24th of February of the last year, respondents have been addressed only the "war in Ukraine" as the final push factor who reinforced their intention to join. The reason why I decided to include "final" is not casual. Even before I asked to elaborate more about their last statement, the respondents wanted to clarify that the war in Ukraine was not the only reason, but due to the specific situation, for them, it represented the main factors that guided them to join the organization.

On the other hand, when analyzing the answers given by members who had joined the organization before the war in Ukraine, it becomes clear that another factor is the most significant, namely the will to defend. Again, the choice of not necessarily using the term "defending one's country" is not accidental and will be adequately explained in the analysis. Consequently, my interpretation would be based on this inner drive that each of them perceived, either because of the war or because of the desire to play an active role in defence. Before discussing the motivations that convinced them to join Naiskodukaitse, the first step is to recognize an awakening that guides these women to abandon their passive role in society and become active agents in terms of security. Without this necessary change in how they perceive themselves, any other incentive would not and would continue to, produce results. In short, they would not be attracted to the organization.

2.4 Ethic aspects and limitations

Since the object of the interviews was to generate insights for social science purposes, I clearly identified myself as a researcher, stating my affiliation as a master's student from the University of Tartu, I explained both in a written informed consent and also during the interviews that the conversation was part of the research project that I was conducting for my master thesis, describing how I would have used the information collected, meaning that the result would have been presented during my defence and published in the form of a dissertation. The interview would have been audio recorded (video recorded, in case of an online interview), to ensure that the researcher has an accurate record of the discussion, but respondents had the possibility to express their preference not to be recorded. I also ensured the protection of personal data and secure processing and storage of the gathered empirical material. Moreover,

it was addressed that the research did not involve risks for the participants. Measures would have been taken to protect the respondents' confidentiality and privacy. The responses will be anonymized, and there will be no link to the respondent's identity in the final document. Participants were free to withdraw from the interview at any time, and the participants were not expected to benefit from participating in the research.

Concerning limitations, the main limitation was access to data. This is not only due to the lack of existing studies on the organization but also due to the limited number of respondents reached during the first stage. For this reason, to increase the sample size, it was necessary to include a qualitative online questionnaire with open-ended questions based on a reduced version of the questions used during the interviews. In this way, I expected to add to the study's quality and validity. The aim was to reach out a bigger number, especially those members who were hesitant to share their information with me during an interview. As already mentioned, the questionnaire was completed by 34 members; however, I recognize that for older members, this may have been a disadvantage because it increased the possibility of excluding respondents with limited digital skills.

The questionnaire was also shared with the Naiskodukaitse communication specialist, who then distributed it through their newsletter. In addition, I supplied similar participant information about the scope of the study so that both members who were interviewed and those who answered the questionnaire could have access to the same information. Although I believe the sample provides some relevant insights (e.g., due to the role, regional location, age, and years inside the organization), the findings might not be fully representative of the entire members of the organizations, and for this reason, further studies will have to test this by working with a larger sample.

The identity of the researcher represented another limitation. I believe that being perceived as a foreigner might have determined some hesitation to meet me and agree to be interviewed. Additionally, to that, another limitation was the language. Although basic knowledge of Estonian developed during the last year, I recognize that a good proficiency would have represented a great advantage not only in reducing possible hesitation to interact with me but also in interacting with more respondents, for example older members that might have enriched the study and enable me to compare their motivation with those of the younger generations. Moreover, it would not have excluded members who are not proficient in English.

Overall, I was satisfied with the good material and the final sample since it was good enough to my scope, provided a preliminary study on motivations that drives women to join

Naiskodukaitse, make women visible and shade the light of a fascinating phenomenon and organization that otherwise would remain circumscribed to the region.

3 Chapter 3: Analysis

Moving to the research question's core, when asked, “*What motivated you to become a member of a voluntary defence organization?*” I previously addressed that motivations result from a complex interplay between “push” and “pull” factors. An example of push factors can be the automatic response to the sense of need, in which individuals, in our case women, have identified and experienced a feeling of vulnerability, combined with the desire to contribute to their society. In contrast, the latter is still driven not exclusively by a feeling but more by a positive incentive due to the benefit that the individual could gain from engaging with the organization, for example, an increased sense of protection or sense of belonging.

Considering the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research project, the following chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the findings arising from the data collection, with the scope of offering an elucidation of the research inquiry. I am going to introduce all the answers I have collected based on the interviews conducted. The findings will now be presented based on the themes that emerged from the data, while in the discussion, I will connect the themes to the relevant literature and establish a ranking. So to have a clear idea of the reasons that have pushed the women interviewed to become members a voluntary defence organization.

Each section is structured to highlight and guide the reader through observations related to the topic under investigation. The aim is to provide a coherent analysis built upon the previous theoretical discussion, thus, examining whether the theoretical motivations that push Estonian women to join a voluntary defence organization are also present among members of the Naiskodukaitse.

3.1 Military interest

Regarding military interest as a possible motivation, the latter represents one of the recurring factors that emerged during the interviews.

Since the object of the research is a women's voluntary defence organization, it might appear an obvious finding. According to the data collected from members who joined the organization before 2013, Naiskodukaitse offered a gateway of opportunity for women to appease their curiosity and, on the other hand, to pursue their desire to contribute to national defence. Indeed, the presence of Naiskodukaitse in the territory enabled Estonian women to approach a world

that was only accessible to men and, thus, less inclusive towards women. The finding illustrates the positive influence that Naiskodukaitse had on women, enabling them to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the knowledge related to the military sector (e.g., how to use a gun, and general knowledge of military equipment).

R1: *It kind of came to me. I knew it was there all the time. My, well in Estonia you have men, men have to go to the military... I also knew that if you go to the military, then after that, if you like the military style, then you can go to defense league. So, at some point I understood that there was actually a female organization also, so mm-hmm. Kind like linger in my head that at some point I will attend."*

R7: *"When I was young, I wanted to go to the military but at that time we were not allowed as men did and I was also friend with people from the Estonian Defence League"*

Overall, the quotes reflect this explicit interest in discovering the military field and how, military interest represented a motivation for them to later become a member of a voluntary defence organization. The respondents were absolutely aware and knew about the existence of Naiskodukaitse, which enhanced their willingness to acquire more information and join. The main difference between the two answers is that, according to the first respondent, is regarding the prior knowledge of the existence of a female organization that would have enabled women to pursue their interest in the military. This awareness that a similar opportunity was also available for women was perceived as an appropriate vehicle to pursue their interests. The second respondent, instead, emphasized specifically the gender limitations; as a woman, she was denied the possibility to contribute to national defence. Although the respondent refers to the military, it was clarified that she was referring to the military conscription reserved for all Estonian male citizens from 18. Moreover, she discussed her social affiliation with friends, also members of the Kaitseliit (Estonian Defence League), which might have further increased their interest in undertaking the same experiences. As a result, it can be argued that women seek women defence organizations.

Data showed a connection between this keen interest in the military environment that, however, failed to be channelled in a growing number of women enlisted to pursue a military career. Instead, women prefer to channel this interest towards a different environment, a voluntary defence organization composed entirely of women that could enable them to contribute to national defence to the best of their abilities. In addition, most members are more comfortable performing support functions in the so-called "white units" than in the "green units", where

members can choose a purely military field, thus acquiring advanced soldiering skills and becoming able to perform a combat role.

R3: *“When I was a bit younger, then I had not thought that (speaking for the joining the Defence Forces), maybe I will go through the military conscription. At one point I thought that I would go through that, but then I got settled in my life and started working and I kind of dismissed it”.*

R8: *“I think that when I learnt about this, it was very close to my heart, but I did not go to the military because in Naiskodukaitse we can, I can be a woman and a mother also. Our life circle is different than men and our organization support that”.*

R5: *“Yes, when I was in High School, I considered to join the Defence Force but as one of my friends like to say, we are Sunday’s soldiers and I like to be like that “*

As addressed by the respondents, there is this genuine interest in the military environment, albeit this sentiment faded due to personal circumstances and different priorities, for example, the desire to pursue a specific career or responsibilities as a parent. Specifically, in the answer provided by the R8, it is evidenced an emotional connection with the organization is portrayed as a safe space compared to another military environment. Naiskodukaitse thus represents the perfect environment where women can still pursue their interest in the military and align this with their identity as women and mothers. Indeed, most of the respondents during the interviews mentioned their families. For these reasons, unless in fewer cases, being a soldier or joining the army was not, or it is not compatible with their life cycle. This implies that being a “Sunday’s soldier”, the members can still pursue and be involved within a military environment and experience this culture and similar activities inside a flexible organization that is not as strict as the army. This explains the reason members usually begin with “white units” (e.g., cultural section, evacuation team, communication team and so on) and gradually consider also to move to the “green units” and acquire a wartime position in case of emergencies.

The following quote present a perfect summary.

R4: *“I have always wanted to, not always but, since my early 20, I wanted to join the military with the 8-month conscription but that did not happen and so I started thinking to join Naiskodukaitse as a way of supporting my country and being there for it and having the chance to stand up for my country when there should be a reason for it.”*

As visible from this quote, Naiskodukaitse members, since younger age, have felt this desire to undertake military conscription along with men, pursue their interests, and acquire military knowledge. Whether this desire was primarily determined by pure curiosity or a sense of

appreciation for strengthening national defence, women sought different paths to overcome the gender limitation prior to 2013. Given Estonia's low demographic rate, the military structure must develop reserve forces capable of supporting professional military personnel. As such, it is essential to specify that young men are annually required to undergo a mandatory period of military preparation with the armed forces, typically lasting between 8 to 11 months. In the event of a conflict, these reservists are promptly mobilized to resume service within their units, providing necessary support (Republic of Estonia Defence Forces, 2020). Prior to 2013, women were not allowed to undergo military conscription in Estonia. Therefore, the only viable option for women who aimed and wished to contribute to the defence of their country was enlisting in the Armed Forces. The reform of the Military Service Act recognized the possibility of performing a "voluntary entering military service of a female person, and the completion thereof with the purpose to acquire military training" (Parliament, 2013).

Therefore, it can be observed that the military interest confirms Segal's military accession policies variable, albeit the variable was tailored to women becoming soldiers. For those who did not wish to pursue a military career and with limited opportunities to explore the military environment, Naiskodukaitse represented the perfect opportunity. In this sense, having an organization for females that promoted a "voluntary accession system" where they could be immersed in a military environment, flexible and less strict compared with joining the army, seemed to represent a valuable incentive to join Naiskodukaitse. This paved the way to expand women's participation in national defence.

3.2 Threat to security

Women motivation to join a voluntary defence organization have been influenced also by the national security situation and perceived sense of threat.

When it comes to perceived security threats to the country, a considerable number of respondents have stated their concern regarding the ongoing war in Ukraine.

R2: I think, yeah, partly the war, of course. I think that was a push.

R4: "The war started in Ukraine that pushed me to look more into it and they were doing those info webinars, also over zoom, where they explained the possibilities they have".

R35: *The direct motivator was the military action in Ukraine that started in February 2022. While I had previously considered joining, from that moment on it was clear that the time to join was now.*

The war in Ukraine had a significant impact on the respondents, and it was considered the main push in leading women to acquire information about the organization further and convince them to become a member. Indeed, the timing was another key element since it prioritized the urgency to get involved with the organization; it was the appropriate time to become involved and adopt a proactive approach. Additionally, it increased their interest in contributing to national defence; members reported their commitment to gathering the necessary information, which enhanced their understanding of the organization and the possibilities offered. Lastly, the respondents have claimed that, albeit it was the push factor, the security concern was not the only motivation influencing them, but other pre-existing factors might have supported this decision.

The previous statements offer a recurrent motivation, especially among junior members who joined the organization immediately after the war in Ukraine. In addition, the constant threat to the country from Russia has caused feelings of anxiety and fear to re-emerge among the population, and as was previously stated, this led to considering the useful opportunities provided by Naiskodukaitse to overcome this sense of anxiety and fear. This means being ready to act.

R7: *“At the moment, so many women have come to the organizations with the fear of the war, so I have seen this. It was the first time when Russia took Crimea, then so many came and some of them have left after they got their knowledge”*

R19: *“Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting anxiety/fear”*

R4: *I guess it is not important to them or are not worried about Russia [referred to women who do not value Naiskodukaitse importance]*

The previous statements offer a recurrent motivation, especially among junior members who joined the organization immediately after the war in Ukraine. Indeed, it was acknowledged that the final push to their decision was due to the event of the war in Ukraine. The historical trauma is still present among these generations of women, which have caused in the past a new sense of anxiety. The simultaneous use of anxiety and fear and the recurrent mention of the war in Ukraine suggests that the event had a major impact on these women's perception of their national security situation. On a psychological level, this has generated a sense of urgency to

be prepared for and ready to protect themselves, their loved ones, and the country. At the same time, they want to overcome the frustration of being unable to act. The last respondent perhaps offered an interesting insight by reflecting on women, not members of the organization. She presents a divergent opinion, implicitly suggesting that Naiskodukaitse members do not underestimate the threat associated with Russia. According to these insights, Naiskodukaitse members have a clear interest and concern regarding Estonian security and therefore, this awareness has led them to adopt a proactive approach. The latter was considered important in preventing panic and fear from spreading among the population. This sense of anxiety has been compounded by the realization that women could learn how to cope in case of danger.

R11: *“Because in times of crisis, it is keeping true and steady, which is going to be the most difficult part. So, for example, I have a friend and when the war in Ukraine started, she became very critical of what Estonia has done for its people and defense, etc... And she was really going on and on about it. And at one point I said, “but do you understand you're doing exactly what the Russians want you to do? You're panicking and you are saying that this country is no good, so you're just actively contributing to Russian propaganda.”*

The respondent, discussing the necessity of women to be producers rather than a passive consumers of security, wanted to share a personal episode that occurred with a friend. It provides a clear understanding of the potentially disruptive consequences that succumbing to fear and anxiety can have on a country and how this would undermine resilience in society. Indeed, similar fears and critical statements on the country's security strategies only generate negative attitudes about whether society should maintain a balanced and rational mindset. That is why it was stressed that it is important that women but also the rest of society recognize that nowadays, national security can be at risk beyond a direct military confrontation. Although it is important to remain vigilant and informed on the current situation, women should not surrender to panic and negative feelings and develop a sort of psychological readiness.

In conclusion, threat to security has reinforced women personal concern and awareness of Estonia's security.

R5: *“Now I would say that there is awareness that everyone should know what to do if a crisis happens and it is more about that. Sense of threat as well, because I think in Estonia we have always grown up with the threat of Russia, and what it is for us, so I think this is part of the motivation why our parents were keen to enroll in these organizations”* [the

respondent mentioned about her previous experience within *Kodutütred (Home Daughters)*].

R9: “*The direct motivation was the war and understanding that yes, we have a threatening country just across the border and we have to be prepared. I have known this but it was kind of in a sleeping stage but then it was the final push to understand that the threat is real*”.

As has been reported, security concerns about the current state of Estonia represented a motivation that further convinced many of the respondents to join Naiskodukaitse. In particular, two main aspects should be discussed from the previous statements. First of all, and this has been a recurrent aspect, Russia still represents a historical threat to the safety of Estonia. Members were motivated to join a voluntary defence organization due to the security concern that a hostile neighbouring country, Russia, represents for Estonia. The respondents acknowledge the collective trauma caused by Russia, thus suggesting how this has influenced Estonian's perception of security. Secondly, awareness and preparedness. This implies that members recognize that everyone in the society, without any distinction among females or males, should be capable of addressing potential critical situations and consequently react. However, it is worth to mention that not all of the members agree this is a constant threat.

R12: “*And I actually do not believe that Estonia is under the constant threat that is very often presented, especially from the professional military side [...]. It's rather about the knowledge and the skills on how to resist and building up this kind of thing. Because I also felt like I don't want to be part of the problem [further acknowledgment to lack of military knowledge]. I do believe that we are not under real threat of war. We have a very different circumstance than Ukraine is in. And I do know that Russia has imperialistic mindset, etcetera, but I doubt that it would be willing to launch into this kind of conflict*”.

Despite a divergent statement, the respondent has distanced herself from the general perception of constant threat for the abovementioned reasons. However, Russia's imperialistic attitude has been recognised, but there is scepticism that, in the short term, this might threaten Estonia. This precisely is an indicator that women have acquired a sense of awareness of the security threat for their country, leading them to join Naiskodukaitse, and this finding is perfectly in line with Segal's national security situation variable, meaning that a higher perceived level of danger influences women decision to join Naiskodukaitse.

3.3 Willingness to defend

According to the respondents, willingness to defend their country, community and kin emerged as another motivations for women to join Naiskodukaitse. The finding is reflective of the majority of the participants, and it is consistent with the theoretical framework adopted.

Respondents have addressed this self-awareness that led them to abandon their passive role as mere security consumers and become active agents. Indeed, without this necessary change in the way women perceive themselves, any other incentive would not have produced any results. These women would not have decided to join a voluntary defence organization. This willingness to become an agent of security seems to be a common element that can be found among the members, regardless of if one considers the data collected from members who joined prior or after the 24th of February 2022. During the interviews, it was often mentioned the possibilities through which members can contribute to the security.

R5: *It was also what they do [speaking for the organization] and also the, the purpose they serve*

R11: *“So, willingness to sacrifice was rather high up, because also, I think in some ways, patriotism is stronger, connected to romantic notions of sacrifice. And the younger you are, and if you're so inclined, it becomes easier”*

R12: *“I definitely discovered things about myself that I am attracted to. The military side of it, I wasn't sure because I always considered myself a pacifist. And I definitely do not like war, and I don't like the war industry, and I think that's not right. But I found my motivation to join when I was considering joining, and I was really looking deep on why are you joining this? [referring to the organization]. I don't have this push to necessarily fight for my state, but I have the push to fight for my people*

As we can see from this quote, members recognize and share the organization's goal of promoting security, meaning an implicit share of similar values. The respondents indeed highlighted some crucial points, recognition of the organization's purposes, a sense of patriotism and duty to contribute and, lastly, a strong sense of commitment toward their community.

Indeed, the first respondent specifically mentioned that the role embodied by the organization had a significant impact on her decision to become a member. This means that members value the organization's efforts to promote and train women to be ready for critical situations and to strengthen the country's security. At the same time, as argued by the second respondent, the organization still promote this sense of patriotism and sacrifice and love for the country that

certainly attracts members who also share these sentiments. The organization thus provide an environment where members can find like-minded people. Lastly, the third element is perhaps the most surprising. The organization is capable of also attracting members who have always been reluctant toward the military aspect or have considered themselves pacifist. The latter suggests that albeit individuals had misconceptions about the organization, the willingness to defend their community is still strongly present.

The sense of awareness in wanting to engage with a defence organization actively has been addressed several times. At the same time, in line with the literature, the willingness to defend the country is closely connected with the perceived sense of danger or the feeling of being frightened by something that has been addressed as threat perception.

R1: *“It was kind of like this protecting of your home country feeling”*

R6: *“I felt that I needed to do something. I needed to be more active or proactive in the defence issues. And then, I do not know, it was something out of my heart, I do not know, I cannot even explain because I did not know what or how could I contribute, but I had this urge in me that I wanted to do something”.*

R12: *“I actually do enjoy the frontline military action, but not for the reasons that I believe that I need to protect the state as a nation. But rather the people. There are so few who are willing to actually take that frontline position, and so many want to stay in the back. And then I realized that I would be the person who would go to the front, rather to be the, you know. Maybe I'm too old and too unskilled, but that was like the driver”.*

The general understanding is that respondents reflect this willingness to defend that it is not necessary towards the nation but rather their community. As expressed by the first respondent, a strong sentiment reveals the personal inclination towards the defence of her own country, which might be connected with her love for her homeland. The second respondent refers to this internal feeling as necessary; she feels the urgency to be a security provider for the community and adopt a wartime position. It is clear through her answer this desire that her actions might produce a positive result in terms of national defence. Lastly, this indisputable commitment and sense of duty are displayed to be responsible for the well-being and defence of her community, especially when others might not share this willingness to act.

A new identity is emerging in which we see women recognizing themselves as security agents. This involves the possibility of contributing to the protection of civilians, which can be applied in a wide range of situations. This role is crucial because, in the event of a foreign invasion,

these members will be tasked with supporting the resistance and ensuring that society continues to function as best it can. The second possibility is strictly related to fighting alongside the army and reservists on the front line.

R11: *I think it's always been just it has become. Part of my identity. So just being part of this organization and knowing that that I will do whatever it takes or whatever I can during the crisis or during war*

R25: *"I feel that this organisation is part of my identity, because my time here has influenced me a lot as a person and has also had a positive impact on my character. I have always felt like a female volunteer, even outside the organisation, even when introducing it to others"*

As presented in the quotes, respondents emphasized their personal connection with the organization and this sense of identity. The first respondent revealed a deep affiliation and loyalty to the organization, meaning that the organization is perceived as part of their identity. This loyalty to the organization is reflected in the willingness to defend in times of crisis, thus demonstrating a strong alignment with the organization's aims. This statement is in line with the position of those members who are part of the "green unit", members who also have a wartime position. However, as reported in the second quote, this sentiment is equally perceived and shared by members who do not have a wartime position but are part of the "white unit". In this case, the respondent has been an instructor for new members.

R6: *"I'm a big believer that our organization plays a huge part in that."*

Their response was clear when asked if they felt they were contributing to national defence. Respondents have acknowledged how each member is capable and possesses the necessary competencies to produce a positive change and contribute significantly to the country. "Most certainly" and "of course" have been consistently accompanied by further explanations, meaning examples of tangible actions and activities that each member can undertake and how this has and could have an impact on the lives of their family, friends and community.

R9: *This organization is so versatile, which means that whatever age you are, I mean everybody, we have women from 18 to 80, so everybody can do something, whatever your physical ability or knowledge you can contribute with something, or teaching others, being an instructor for younger members. We have evacuation groups where you can be the person who is responsible for receiving people and talk to them and calm them down that does not need any physical force.*

Indeed, we can observe that the first step concerns an awareness that Naiskodukaitse represents a unique reality within the nation, both in terms of structure and purpose. Members share the belief that even when others do not engage with the organization, they can act as mediators. Being capable to act and thus sharing the information acquired enables them to contribute overall to the safety and security of their society and the country.

R11: *“I think that is undisputable that. Yes. Um, and because when we think about the production of security, production of security, it is a very wide area where we were we play a bigger role than we think, because in times of crisis, it is keeping true and steady, which is going to be the most difficult part.”*

The quote is particularly important because it highlights probably on the most critical aspect that these women try to achieve with their willingness to defend and by being members. The respondent discussed why it is necessary that women comprehend that the effort of the single is indispensable and the beneficial outcome that this generates for the society. Indeed, members within the organization can exploit their potential and become security providers. She further elaborated on this last statement, explaining that women in this sense can actively be capable to address security issues and have all the necessary competences to act and maintain a sense of control. In contrast, when women and the rest of civilian do not have the same competencies, they confront major challenges especially regarding survival and the capacity to cope with difficult situations.

R10: *“I strongly, strongly believe that it's this case that every woman can contribute to the safety and the defense of Estonia, because, for example, in the time of crisis, all of our members have a certain role. Either it is military, if they're in the sort of wartime units, then they will go with the units to the front lines and so on. But the others, they will help out with the evacuations or whatever. And I believe that some, even those women who don't have a certain assigned role, they still their mindset is sort of to be like, you know, you will sort of pull out, pull up your sleeves and start doing the work. You won't be escaping or fleeing or, you know, hiding under a rock, panicking and so on.”*

According to the respondent, members possess this proactive and resilient attitude that enables them to contribute according to their capabilities. They will not represent a burden for the country, but instead, they will be an indispensable resource.

In fact, one respondent emphasized that it was during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, and later with the crisis in Ukraine, that the organization became more visible in society's eyes. (Interview 10). This is seen as a crucial aspect because, according to the responses received, there seems to be no women's organization on such a large scale in Estonia. For this reason,

and precisely because of its flexible structure, it is believed that the organization can, and in the future, will be able to offer opportunities of all kinds to every woman. It will be a place where women can offer an innovative boost that can therefore help to strengthen Estonia not only in a purely defensive aspect but also as a stepping-stone for wider contributions (interview 10). In this way, the organization is able to channel strong potential, as it is recognized that each member who has consciously chosen to join and become a member of the organization has the aptitude and potential that not only the organization but also social needs.

In conclusion, members shared a common understanding that by joining the organization, it is a step forward the implementation of the defence policy adopted by the country, meaning shape a resilient society that is capable to cope with any possible situation. If one considers Naiskodukaitse, it means to push and incentivize a segment of the society that might be perceived as passive. It was acknowledged that, given the small size of Estonia as a state and the demographic levels, the country cannot afford to simply exclude a considerable section of the society since this would represent a thoughtless waste of resources (Interview 6). On the contrary, it is believed that any form of preparation should be incentivized, and by doing this, women would possess the necessary knowledge to cope with crisis and they would not represent a burden for the army and the country.

3.4 Patriotism

Values, and in particular those related with patriotism emerged as another motivation that drives women to join the organization. Moreover, it seems interconnected with the motivation previously described willingness to defend.

R11: *“I was sort of stepped in this sort of culture, patriotic culture to an extent. And then I thought, why not?”*

R25: *“I am an historian, so the twists and turns of Estonian history were close to my heart, and I hoped to help prevent history from repeating itself. So, patriotism and idealism”*

Historical awareness and patriotic feelings are other interesting findings evidenced so far. As evidenced by the quotes, growing up in an environment that cherishes national identity and patriotic feelings has automatically attracted women to join the organization. Similarly, the second respondent stressed her historical interest and awareness that envisioned in

Naiskodukaitse the possibility to contribute and ensure that events of the past, and there is a tacit reference to the Soviet occupation, would never happen again.

Finally, it is possible to observe that members share similar values with the organization and their commitment within “white unit” to preserve them.

R7: [Referring to the organization] *“Definitely same values as freedom, culture and same can be found in Naiskodukaitse and the mission to preserve our culture and that is why we celebrate for example our Estonian mother language... And I believe that women who are there, they have the same values”*

R3: *“It is a privilege to be able to speak in your own language, to enjoy the culture in your own language, to have the freedom of speech and all that, and just being a part of this organization. It is the opportunity to give back and to support that you can still have those things”*

R10: *“You know, the sort of the values and the mindset of the members are the same, even though, you know, maybe we don't agree on politics or what kind of music we like or, you know, all of these things are very different, but then we still share the core values, and it is sort of a very uniting feeling.*

This patriotic feeling encompasses a broader discourse on the significance of preserving national values, such as freedom and independence, as well as culture and traditions.”

As emphasized by the first respondent, they are motivated to contribute to this mission to preserve their culture, and this is also the role that specifically the cultural group is in charge of when organizing cultural or commemorative events. Secondly, it is emphasized that Naiskodukaitse enables members to express and value their Estonian identity. Lastly, these core values of the organizations are a powerful element that creates unity among members and overcomes any divergence.

However, this is not a common believe anymore among the organization and in some cases, it was clearly stated that members were not aligned with this strong patriotic sentiment promoted by the organization.

R24: *“I am not as patriotic as I was when I joined the organization, because I am no longer so idealistic. This is not because of the NKK but because of other life experiences.”*

R2: *“I was skeptical about it. I guess I did. I think that's why I didn't join it the first place when I understood that she's part of it. I thought it's a bit too much. Somehow thought it, it's too patriotic.”*

This allows me to present a very interesting aspect that has emerged from the analysis of the data, which has led to a hypothetical shift between the organization and the new generation, also related to the perception of the organization. Members of the organization stated that they partially find themselves aligned with the organization's values. In recent years, the values shared by the Naiskodukaitse are not so appealing anymore to the new generations and younger women, thus portraying the organization as less attractive (Interview 12). Although the organization is flexible in its structure, some criticisms have emerged regarding the traditional outlook that it might be more aligned with older generations' preferences.

R12: *“It has a very traditional look from the outside and from the inside, I have a feeling it is also very traditional”*

According to the respondent, this does not imply that younger generations of women are not entirely motivated to join, or they cannot overcome this vision, but it seems it represents more a disincentive to their participation rather than act as a motivational factor.

Moreover, it was possible to capture an interesting trend that demonstrated how, patriotism and willingness to defend, were indeed the main motivation among older members, whether the trend seem to be the opposite when we consider younger generation, thus from 18 years old.

R4: *“For example, younger people usually, they do not see the reasons”*

R12: *“I consider myself to be between the two generators. I understand that this is a thing that a lot of my co members carry this kind of value set, but then I also see that I am probably the last generation who is still willing to join, and younger women often will not because it doesn't match the modern values anymore”*

3.5 Empowerment and self-sufficiency

Another motivation to join a female defence organization is connected with a perceived sense of empowerment and the possibility of acquiring the necessary knowledge to cope with critical situations. This being said, respondents have acknowledged their unpreparedness to deal with critical and unpredictable situations. Due to this, Naiskodukaitse was perceived as the perfect organization that can enable the respondents to acquire the necessary military knowledge and basic skills while supporting them during this process.

This motivation is connected with the already mentioned threat of security motivation and the urgency to cope with anxiety and fear or simply due to their willingness to defend.

R12: “If there is actually a military conflict, then if I don't have any skills, I don't have any knowledge of how to operate, I don't know military equipment or I don't know how to I don't understand how nation protection actually works or the security works, then I am part of the problem and not part of the solution”

R The desire was to make a difference in the community. It was also about self-development and preparedness for crisis situations

R14: *A chance to be in the picture, to be important, in your hometown. The Women's National Defence Corps offers a wide range of opportunities for self-fulfilment.*

According to the respondents, these statements illustrate that women value the necessity to acquire relevant skills in order to be prepared and how this knowledge can be vital not only for their personal growth within the organization but, most importantly, because this enables them to contribute to national security. Indeed, As the first respondent mentioned, without this knowledge gained through the organization, she would not be capable of performing any effective action if Estonia were under threat. Due to that, she argues that women who join Naiskodukaitse embrace this proactive attitude of being security providers rather than being a burden for their country. Moreover, the second important aspect is connected with the community. It is widely shared that respondents aim to contribute to the safety of their community; thus, they perceive this sense of responsibility and the necessity to feel capable of doing this. They try to have a positive impact which, in some cases, is correlated with a sense of prestige, personal growth, and empowerment.

Regarding the opportunities, respondents claimed to have little awareness of the potential opportunities before joining the organization

R4: *“after i joined I was confused for a couple of months. I did not know about the basic trainings where you get information about the activities and possibilities”*

On the contrary, many shared positive feelings about the numerous events in which they participated.

R9: *“There are so many different trainings and courses that we can choose to develop ourselves and develop new skills. We have possibility but we are not obliged, and we can choose between 5 or 6 different lines of activities or directions into which go in deeper and*

develop our skills, for example first aid. I could choose this as profession and develop myself in this sense”.

R3: If it's possible, and if I have time, I teach one, some of the courses or one of the courses, well, But other than that, I think it's very important that even if the person just knows about how to extinguish fire that she learned from one of the courses, then it already is creates more safety and, and knowing how to act in a critical situation.

As evidenced in those quotes, respondents have shared positive opinions regarding the vast opportunities the organizations provide to learn and advance their knowledge, not only about specific security topics. Indeed, members can freely choose different areas of specialization and broaden their competencies. Similarly, the second respondent emphasized a fundamental aspect that is connected with those members who are part of the “white units”, meaning those members who do not also have a wartime position and thus an advanced knowledge of military skills. Members in the white units

R10: “I just feel that the organization is so has so many different opportunities to offer to for the person to grow and also to participate. You know, just first of all, to receive, to get new knowledge and skills and so on, and then also to give back”

The most prevalent adjective used to characterize these activities were “*exciting*” and “*enthusiastic*”; while others defined those activities as a chance to engage in “*adventures*” projects and exercises in which they had been interested for a long time. Moreover, the findings suggest that the activities and training provided by the organization boost and maintain their engagement, and this data seem consistent both before and after their enrollment. In addition to that, there is a beneficial impact on the organization in its capability to achieve its objectives, especially due to an enhancement of individual competencies and skills. As it was mentioned, it requires teamwork, as each member is prepared with the necessary skills developed through training and specialization modules.

Nevertheless, data proved that women could better cope with high levels of stress and anxiety due to their prior training provided by the voluntary defence organization. Indeed, comparisons were drawn by several respondents concerning their previous personal attitude on coping with unpredictable scenarios and the progress registered after becoming a member.

R1: *“I learnt how not to be scared of things that happen for unexpected events. Being able to stay calm in a crisis”.*

R27: *I'm much more knowledgeable about defence issues. In addition, I have acquired many life skills. I believe that I am much better able to manage in the forest today than I was before I became a member, and I hope that I will be better able to protect and manage myself and my family in crisis situations.*

In terms of motivation, the perceived sense of empowerment was often correlated with a sentiment of fulfillment that was differentiated as the chance to develop new competences and to use those competences to provide benefits for others.

R7: *“You have so many possibilities to growth and especially also outside Naiskodukaitse, also in your daily life and you can use those courses”.*

This leads to increased self-awareness, as members acknowledge their own self-reliance and capacity to handle unforeseeable events with confidence and precision, thus being able to assess their personal development and growth. *“Smarter”, “better”, “brave” and “wise”* are the adjectives often used to answer to my question, connected with *“curiosity”* which emerged as a related factor, as revealed in the analysis. Concerning the skills acquired, participants reported full or basic acquisition in terms of security and additional competencies. Specifically, respondents reported being more solution-oriented, demonstrating self-confidence, self-reliance, perseverance, preparedness, and decisiveness. Participants also highlighted their ability to be resilient and aware of their own limitations. In addition, the experience was found to have a positive impact on participants' motivation and self-esteem, as they recognized personal growth and development as a result of the training.

Although the organization is defensive in the structure and regarding the goal it aims to achieve, the majority of women are not initially driven to acquire soldiering skills, but mostly transversal competencies that increase the value of this experience by providing competencies that can also be applied in their daily life. At the same time, respondents have emphasized strengthening soft skills like time management, higher stress tolerance, better communication, public speaking, organization, etc.

Lastly, there is also a section of those members who are more interested on the wartime position, but at least for this sample, it was not shared by everyone.

R3: *“I am one of those who have a war time position, so when the war comes, I am part of the group that is responsible when there is the mobilization. We are the ones who will put*

up the first gatherings, like we will take the people, register them, give them their uniforms and stuff like that”.

R17: *“I wanted to educate and train myself on how to cope in a crisis, to help myself and others” .*

According to the respondent, there is a continuous matching of interests where members can explore the learning opportunities accessible to them that are valued as extremely necessary. More importantly, as members of this organization, respondents described Naiskodukaitse as a stimulating environment that expires these women to leave their comfort zone and experiment with challenging opportunities to master unfamiliar knowledge related to the military field or simply first aid, organizations of local events, how to behave in case of an evacuation and what do you need. Leaving their comfort zone also means encouraging personal growth, development, and empowerment. This means having the opportunity to challenge oneself not only on a personal level but also as a member of the same organization; therefore, the respondent was able to demonstrate their value and channel this added value to their community. The interviewees have acknowledged that life should go on; for those in a war position, it is a great relief to know that the rest of the members will be able to take good care of the society, because when a common goal unites members, nothing is impossible to achieve. Due to that, it is not an egoistic feeling that drives the respondents; moreover, a sense of empowerment in being ready to act. The participant who endorsed this sentiment was consistent, discussing in detail how the training undertaken has increased their sense of confidence in their capacities and skills and how they could use that information to ensure the safety of their beloved ones. The findings revealed that, unsurprisingly, for many of the respondents, their primary concern was not the state but rather their children or loved ones (family was always mentioned).

R2: *I think you can't have one without other, so I, I would say both. But of course, when it comes to crisis, I think you're most certainly concerned about yourself and your family.*

R1: *I can like learn how to defend. Myself, my family, in case of any danger*

R32: *Protect and defend your family, your loved ones, your country.*

The community instead was ranked as a second priority, while on the other hand, the state was considered less important. Notably, the term “state” as a political entity was absent from the answers that I collected; for example, several respondents used the expression “*Estonia*” or

“*my country*”. During the interviews, participants often provided additional information when I asked to elaborate on the previous statement, and I could observe that the respondents tended to focus their attention on their loved ones. Also, in this case, the finding is not unexpected, given the constant emphasis on family devoted by many of the respondents during the interviews.

3.6 Summary of the findings

Overall, the findings concerned only those motivations that emerged from the interviews and the questionnaire. Through the data collected, it was possible to identify the overall motivations and contrary to the previous discussion, some of those motivations were not present.

In line with the theoretical models, the primary motivations seem to be connected with the military variable (security concern) highlighted by Segal and the protective variable presented in the Volunteer Functions Inventory.

Threats to security and willingness to defend have emerged quite predominantly from the respondents. However, threat to security appeared to be the main motivation that led women to join the organization immediately after the war in Ukraine. The threat to security has represented a serious concern, determining a sense of urgency to get involved and to get the necessary knowledge to overcome the sense of anxiety re-emerged. The historical threat posed by Russia has determined this urgency to be ready to act. However, it is important to acknowledge that respondents have addressed that the threat to security was not the only motivation, suggestions that perhaps also other motivations might have influenced their decision to become members.

The second motivation is a willingness to defend. Also, in this case, the motivation was quite predominant and in line with Segal’s model. The motivation was especially visible in members that joined the organization prior to the war in Ukraine, but it has also emerged among junior members. The findings present a willingness to protect their nation, community, and family as the main motivation. The respondents have demonstrated awareness and willingness to be security providers rather than passive consumers. They are firmly convinced that their action can make a difference in terms of national defence. Indeed, Naiskodukaitse was perceived as the channel through which they exploit their potential, train themselves and generate a positive outcome in terms of implementing national defence policies and shaping a resilient society.

The third motivation that emerged is military interest. The motivation seems to be connected with a general understanding of Segal's military variable, albeit military interest, as such, might be a "new" motivation. Compared to the previous threat to security and willingness to defend, military interest was indeed present but not as widely shared by all the members. This was evident in senior members who, prior to the military reform, could not participate in military conscription due to other personal circumstances. For this reason, they were motivated to join a flexible and safe environment like Naiskodukaitse, which would have enabled them to pursue their interest.

The fourth motivation is connected with patriotic values. This motivation is connected with the VFI rather than Segal's model. It emerged that patriotism and other related values represented a motivation to join the organization, especially among women that have always cherished national identity and patriotic feelings. Moreover, within the organization, the members can manifest this patriotic identity. On the other hand, the findings have evidenced a different trend among the younger generations that might not feel motivated to join due to the traditional image portrayed by the organization.

Lastly, women are also motivated by this empowering feeling and the possibility of being self-sufficient. The motivation is connected with the VFI esteem variable. In this sense, they feel capable of handling every critical situation. Women are motivated to join in order to acquire the necessary skills, and in doing so, they contribute to national defence or protect their families.

Surprisingly, social motivation did not emerge. I would have expected that having friends or acquaintances within the organization or other defence organizations would have been a motivation. Instead, the latter emerged only in relation to how they discovered the organization or as a motivation to explain the reason women are still committed to the organizations.

4 Conclusion

The outbreak of war in Ukraine has led to an exponential increase in the number of women interested in becoming members of women's voluntary defence organizations in Estonia in recent months. In fact, the Naiskodukaitse in Estonia is part of a sub-section of the Kaitseliit, which operates through volunteers who share the same goal of contributing to the defence of their nation by supporting the armed forces, but which includes both women and men in its ranks. Given the uniqueness of the organization and the lack of modern studies on these types of organizations, it was, therefore, necessary to investigate the phenomenon to provide a preliminary understanding of the motivations that drive women to join women's voluntary defence organizations and thus make women visible with the contribution that they can offer in term of security.

In developing this thesis, I have tried to outline how interest in voluntary women's defence organizations has been rekindled. The research defines civil defence as a type of crisis management created by national governments to ensure that citizens have gained the required abilities to safeguard the population's protection during crucial scenarios. Communications, shelter, emergency welfare, transportation, supply, and other supporting areas are all part of civil defence. The training classes allowed participants to specialize in each area and fulfil the necessary activities. Civil defence was originally part of a strategy to create "desirable citizens," which led to the notion that civil defence could be positioned in a broader vision of strengthening not only ties between these two actors but also a form of control. According to the researchers, the civic defence may be an essential component for establishing strong total defence performance. This being said, the thesis moved to present how these tasks were performed by voluntary defence organizations and due to the scarcity of previous studies, a theoretical conceptualization has been provided, showing in which sense these organizations differ from armed forces and what have been their role. Lastly, there have been some further considerations on gender and gendered organizations, trying to understand if the motivations provided by the respondents of these organizations would have been gender specific.

A sociological approach has been adopted to answer the research question and thus meaningfully address what motivates women to join this specific organization. Although motivations can be explained according to different approaches that focus on "social exchanges", "incentives", and "needs", I believe that in order to comprehend women's

motivations for joining volunteer defence organizations, a multidimensional approach was adopted. The Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) represented a useful tool for identifying different motivations such as values, understanding, career, social, esteem and protective variables that would have been possible explanations to answer the research question. For this reason, I have identified several categories of motivations, shared value of patriotism, military motivations, career advancement opportunities, social connection, and a sense of self-efficiency and empowerment, which could be driving individuals/women to join such organizations. In the empirical study, the goal was to find out what motivated women to join Naikodukaitse. Segal's research expands our understanding of the elements influencing women's engagement in the military forces. Finally, understanding the complex motivations that drive women's participation in voluntary defence organizations can assist organizations in recruiting and retaining female members and improving their effectiveness in serving their communities and countries. Moreover, suppose the long-term goal is to encourage women's access and inclusion in the military environment, which does not necessarily mean choosing a military career, but simply being able to contribute as a volunteer to defence organizations. In that case, more research should be done on why this sociological gap still exists. Only in this way, I believe, can effective policies be designed that do not simply glorify the opportunities offered by a career or by belonging to such an environment. The aim, as the members repeatedly emphasized, is not only to increase the number of members in the organization but also to convey the message that the transversal skills that can be acquired in the organization make it possible to train citizens who are adequately prepared and aware of their abilities.

As discussed, the study was designed as a single case study and adopted a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is the most appropriate to capture the respondents' motivations. Indeed, qualitative inquiries of semi-structured interviews enabled me to present a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the topic. The data were collected through 13 in-depth interviews and 34 open-ended questionnaires.

As presented in the analysis chapter, I have collected and analyzed original empirical data to identify women's most important motivations for joining volunteer defence organizations. According to the final results, threat to security, willingness to defend, military interest, patriotic values and empowerment and feeling of self-sufficiency were the motivations that emerged. Among these, threat to security and willingness to defend was the most important, according to the respondents. Security concerns, a determination to protect, military interest,

patriotic ideals, and a desire for empowerment and self-sufficiency are the key motives for women joining the group following the conflict in Ukraine. Russia's danger to security, as well as the desire to protect their nation, community, and family, were key motivators. Military interest was evident, especially among older members who were unable to engage in conscription. Patriotic principles were important, yet newer generations may be sceptical owing to the organization's old reputation. Women want empowerment and the ability to deal with crisis circumstances.

I suggest that while society officially accepts and recognizes women's capacity to engage in and play an active role in national defence and security, gender roles and stereotypes appear to have a negative role in society, necessitating gender equality programs. In addition, I mentioned the importance of including civil society in discussions on security. Through these types of volunteer organizations, it may become easier to improve civil-military relations, avoiding a dismissive attitude toward the military environment among women. Further research using a longitudinal approach would allow for the tracking of changes and trends over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations of women joining voluntary defence organizations. This could include following up with the same individuals many times or recruiting new participants at different intervals to capture changes in motivation over time.

A comparative study with Scandinavian countries could also help to assess whether the same motives for joining voluntary defence organizations apply across cultural contexts. This could include comparing women's motives in Estonia to those in neighbouring nations like Finland, Sweden, and Norway. A study of this type could provide insights into the impact of cultural and societal factors on women's motivation to join volunteer defence organizations, thereby informing the creation of methods to boost recruitment and retention in these organizations across different contexts.

Moreover, suppose the long-term goal is to encourage women's access and inclusion in the military environment, which does not necessarily mean choosing a military career, but simply being able to contribute as a volunteer to defence organizations. In that case, more research should be done on why this sociological gap still exists. Only in this way, I believe, can effective policies be designed that do not simply glorify the opportunities offered by a career or by belonging to such an environment. The aim, as the members repeatedly emphasized, is not only to increase the number of members in the organization but also to convey the message

that the transversal skills that can be acquired in the organization make it possible to train citizens who are adequately prepared and aware of their abilities.

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Annexes

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Madam:

You have been invited to participate in a study as a part of the master research project “*Be ready to defend to the best of your ability*” *Women and civil defence: the case of Estonia and Naiskodukaitse (Women’s Voluntary Defence Organization)*, carried out by the graduate student Cristina Clemente of the University of Tartu Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. You have been selected to participate in the study due to your involvement as a member of the Naiskodukaitse. Therefore, your experience is precious for the scope of the study. The information provided in this form is to help you decide whether you would like to participate in this study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher at cristina.clemente@ut.ee.

Aim and implications of the research: Historically, women have not been the subject of security studies but rather the object. Although previous studies have provided insightful contributions, addressing women's willingness to contribute to national defence, what needs to be added is a comprehensive explanation of the factors that lead women nowadays to join voluntary defence organizations like Naiskodukaitse. The question explored in the research is: *What explains the decision of women to participate in voluntary defence organizations?*

Procedure of the research: Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about your personal experience as a member, circumstances that influenced the decision to remain committed, personal growth within the organization, etc. The interview is designed as an opportunity for participants to share their stories.

The interview will be audio recorded (video recorded, in case of an online interview), to ensure that the researcher has an accurate record of the discussion. However, let the researcher know if you prefer not to be recorded.

The researcher will ensure the protection of personal data and secure processing and storage of the gathered empirical material.

Possible risks and benefits for participants: The research does not involve risks for the participants. Measures will be taken to protect the respondents' confidentiality and privacy. The responses will be anonymized, and there will be no link to the respondent's identity in the final document.

Participants are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

The participant is not expected to benefit from participating in the research.

Anonymity and confidentiality of personal data: Measures will be taken to protect the participant's privacy and confidentiality. The personal identifiers (e.g., name, surname, email address, etc.) will not be revealed and will only be known to the researcher. Confidentiality will be strictly observed; the respondents will be anonymous, and the answers will not be linked to their identifiers in the master thesis.

The only person who will have access to the video and audio files and the transcription of the interviews is the researcher, Cristina Clemente and the University of Tartu.

Rights and research participants: The participant can choose not to participate in this study or withdraw at any time during or after the research begins. Should you encounter problems due to participating in this study, don't hesitate to get in touch with the researcher.

Informed consent: You freely decide whether to participate in this research study. Agreeing to participate means that you have read and understood this information sheet, your questions have been answered, and you have decided to be part of the research study.

Don't hesitate to get in touch with the researcher if you have any questions before, during, or after the interview.

If you want to participate, please sign the attached informed consent form.

Thank you for your time and consideration in taking part in the study!

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read the attached Participant Information Sheet on the study, and I understand the purpose and procedures described within it.

I understand that my participation in this study will involve me taking part in an audio or video recorded discussion-interview and that the questions asked will be related to women's motivations to join Naiskodukaitse, more generally, a women's voluntary defence organization.

I understand that the data and results gathered from the interview may be diffused by the University of Tartu.

I had an opportunity to ask questions, and I am satisfied with the answers provided by the researcher.

I freely agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I can withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the University of Tartu.

I will respect the confidentiality of the interview.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date/Location: _____

Interview guide

1. How did you discover Naiskodukaitse?
2. Did you have previous expectations about the organisations? And if yes, were these expectations met?
3. What motivated you to become a member?
4. What circumstances influenced your decision to stay committed to the organisation?
5. What is your role and responsibility within the organisation? How would you describe your personal experience as a member so far?
6. Which competencies and skills have you developed in the organisation?
7. Have you ever considered, or would you consider joining the Defence Forces?
8. Does any of your family, close friends, or acquaintances part of the Defence Forces or the Defence League? Would you say that their experience influenced your decision to join?
9. How important is to you to develop a sense of belonging with other members of the organisation?
10. Would you agree that as a member of the Naiskodukaitse, every woman can contribute to the defence of Estonia?
11. Do you have any acquaintance who have not joined the organisation? What are usually the main reasons why they have not joined?

List of interviews

No	Role	Date
Respondent 1	Leading role in management board in her district – senior member	30.03.2023
Respondent 2	Junior member	22.03. 2023
Respondent 3	Member of the board of her district – senior member	04.04.2023
Respondent 4	Member of her district board – junior member	12.04.2023
Respondent 5	Leader of the evacuation group of her district – junior member	22.03.2023
Respondent 6	Deputy chairwomen – senior member	21.03.2023
Respondent 7	Member of her district board – senior member	22.03.2023
Respondent 8	Instructor – wartime position – leader of her district and member of the Defence League board - Senior member	08.04.2023
Respondent 9	Member of the first aid section in her district – junior member	04.04.2023
Respondent 10	Responsible for public relations – senior member	30.03.2023
Respondent 11	Chief of the regulation/evacuation group – senior member	27.03.2023
Respondent 12	Coordinator of the youth group of her district – junior member	30.03.2023
Respondent 13	Member of the board – junior member	19.04.2023

List of respondents to the online questionnaire

No	Role	Date
Respondent 14	Member of the district board and supporting position – senior member	29.02.2023
Respondent 15	District vice-president and member of the evacuation team – N/A	30. 03.2023

Respondent 16	Senior member	30.03.2023
Respondent 17	Responsible of public relations and part of the evacuation team of her district - Senior member	31.03.2023
Respondent 18	Member of the board of her district (jaoskonna) – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 19	Junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 20	Volunteer instructor for the Home Daughters group of her district – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 21	Paramedic of the evacuation team – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 22	Liason team – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 23	Liaison team – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 24	Member of the staff group – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 25	Supportive member and instructor – senior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 26	Junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 27	Member of the evacuation team – senior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 28	First aid team – N/A	02.04.2023
Respondent 29	Member of the catering team and assistant manager – N/A	02.04.2023
Respondent 30	Public relations and catering team – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 31	Head of the catering team and current member of the division board (jaoskonna), member of hiking group – junior member	02.04.2023
Respondent 32	Junior member	03.04.2023
Respondent 33	Catering team – N/A	03.04.2023
Respondent 34	Volunteer in target unit within KL – senior member	03.04.2023
Respondent 35	Junior member	03.04.2023
Respondent 36	Junior member	03.04.2023
Respondent 37	Senior member	04.04.2023

Respondent 38	Member of the evacuation team – N/A	04.04.2023
Respondent 39	Member of the board – senior member	04.04.2023
Respondent 40	Member of the executive board – junior member	04.04.2023
Respondent 41	Junior member	05.04.2023
Respondent 42	Chairwoman of her jaoskonna, member of the civil-military cooperation team and assistant to the catering group leader – senior member	05.04.2023
Respondent 43	Junior member	05.04.2023
Respondent 44	Junior member	12.04.2023
Respondent 45	Junior member	16.04.2023